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SERMONS

ON THE

FOLLOWING SUBJECTS.

I. THE ADVANTAGES OF NATIONAL REPENTANCE.

II. THE RUINOUS EFFECTS OF

CIVIL WAR.

III. THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN.

IV. THE HOPE OF MEETING, KNOWING, and REJOICING with VIRTUOUS FRIENDS, IN A FUTURE WORLD.

BY

WILLIAM STEEL DICKSON.

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SERMON I.

ON THE

Advantages of National Repentance,

PREACHED TO THE

Proteſtant Diſſenting Congregation of

BALLYHALBERT,

DECEMBER 13th, 1776.

Being a DAY appointed, by GOVERNMENT,

AS A

GENERAL FAST.

PREFACE.

THE two following Sermons were written, entirely, with a View to the Congregation before which they were preached. The Author, ſo far from intending to ſubmit them to the public eye, poſitively refuſed to comply with the warmeſt ſolicitations of many Friends, who urged him to publiſh them. However, the Circulation of ſome Reports concerning political Sentiments, ſaid to be contained in them, hath obliged him to expoſe them, in his own Vindication. How far they may ſerve this Purpoſe Time muſt ſhew. Be that as it may, he aſſures the Public that he hath not preſumed to retrench, add, or, in any Manner, to modify, a Sentiment in them, ſince they were preached. He hath, even, omitted ſome Corrections, both in Stile and Arrangement, leſt they ſhould be ſuppoſed to be made with this View. He hopes this Circumſtance will apologize for any Incorrectneſs, or Inelegance of expreſſion which may occur in peruſing them.

For the Sentiments he means no Apology. He truſts they are neither inconſiſtent with the Rights of Mankind, nor the Peace and Intereſts of the Britiſh Empire: And he wiſhes to hold them with that ſpirit of Moderation which Chriſtianity, every where, recommends and inculcates.

Should theſe Diſcourſes have any Influence in promoting a Return to Virtue, and a Love of Peace, the Author will think himſelf happy in the Accompliſhment of his chief End in compoſing them. If they fail of this, he flatters himſelf, that they will deſcend, harmleſs and unoffending, to the Regions of Forgetfulneſs, to which ſo many Trifles of the Kind have gone before them, and many more muſt follow.

SERMON I.

II CHRON. VII. 14.

If my People, which are called by my Name, will humble themſelves, and pray, and ſeek my Face, and turn from their wicked Ways; then will I hear from Heaven, and will forgive their Sin, and will heal their Land.

WHATEVER unbecoming Sentiments Men may entertain, in proſperous Circumſtances, it is evident that Afflictions, in general, tend to correct them, and powerfully miniſter to their chief Good. This holds, equally, with Reſpect to Individuals, and Bodies politic. For this Reaſon, God hath cloſely connected Sin and Suffering, under his Government, and, ſometimes, ſenſibly interpoſes in the Chaſtiſement of Iniquity. This appears, remarkably,

in the Hiſtory of the Iſraelites, whoſe Obſtinacy, frequently, expoſed them to ſevere Correction. Yet, no ſooner did they return to a Senſe of Duty, than the Rod was withdrawn, and Evil removed from them.

THE many exemplary Inſtances of this Kind, which occurred before the Times of Solomon, convinced him of two important Facts. The One, that God certainly puniſhed national Wickedneſs with national Calamities: The other, that God, in the Courſe of his Providence, certainly removed theſe Calamities, upon national Repentance, and Return to Duty.

UPON Conviction of theſe is founded that moſt excellent Prayer, which Solomon offered up before all the People, at the Conſecration of the Temple, which he built; That under whatever Diſtreſſes they ſhould labour, on account of their Iniquities, they might be delivered from them, upon Humiliation and Repentance: "If there be Dearth in the Land," ſaith he, "if there be Peſtilence, if there be "Blaſting, or Mildew, Locuſts, or Caterpillars; if their Enemies beſiege them in the "Cities of their Land, whatſoever ſore, or "whatſoever Sickneſs there be: then what "Prayer or what Supplication ſoever ſhall be "made of any Man, or of all thy People "Iſrael, when every one ſhall know his own "Sore, and his own Grief, and ſhall ſpread "forth his Hands in this Houſe: then hear "thou from Heaven, thy Dwelling-place, "and forgive, and render unto every Man according

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" cording to all his Ways, whoſe Heart thou
" knoweſt, that they may fear thee, to walk
" in thy Ways ſo long as they live in the
" Land which thou gaveſt unto our Fathers."

THE Acceptance of this prayer, and the Intention of Heaven to accompliſh the Deſire expreſſed in it, were teſtified unto Solomon, by the Deſcent of Fire, from Heaven, to conſume the Sacrifice which he offered. And God appeared to him, afterwards, and aſſured him of the ſame, ſaying, " I have heard thy
" Prayer, and choſen this Place to myſelf, for
" an Houſe of Sacrifice. If I ſhut up Heaven
" that there be no Rain, or if I command the
" Locuſt to devour the Land, or if I ſend the
" Peſtilence among my People; If my People,
" which are called by my Name, ſhall
" humble themſelves, and pray, and ſeek my
" Face, and turn from their wicked Ways;
" then will I hear from Heaven, and will for-
" give their Sin, and will heal their Land."

THE Meaning of this Promiſe is ſo extremely obvious, that it ſcarcely admits of Explication. However, we may obſerve, that the Forgiveneſs, here promiſed, is only an Exemption, or Deliverance from the national Diſtreſſes with which the People were viſited. This is a Senſe of the Expreſſion, perfectly conſiſtent with the Spirit of the Jewiſh Law. As it denounced temporal Evils againſt Tranſgreſſion, it naturally follows, that the Removal of theſe Evils ſhould be conſidered as the Forgiveneſs of the Sins, for which they were in-

flicted. In the ſame Senſe, our Lord, frequently, uſed the Phraſe, and applied it to Individuals, whoſe Sickneſs, Infirmity, or Pains, he removed, by his Miracle-working Power.

THE Conditions, upon which the Promiſe is made, are as plainly expreſſed as the Promiſe itſelf. It is true, Language, when applied to Spirit, its Properties, and Operations, muſt be underſtood, entirely, in a figurative Senſe. Yet, from our being conſtantly accuſtomed to ſuch Senſe, we are ſeldom at a Loſs in the Application of it.

THE only Expreſſion, here, which may require any Explication, is *ſeeking the Face of God.* And, the ſlighteſt Attention, to a familiar Circumſtance, will determine its Meaning. Every Being takes Pleaſure in turning towards an agreeable Object, and viewing it with Attention; whereas, we, naturally, turn away from ſuch as are diſagreeable and diſguſting. Hence, in a figurative Senſe, to turn towards, or give our Face or Countenance, ſignifies, to approve, deſire, or love; *to turn from*, ſignifies, to diſapprove, deſpiſe, or hate; and, *to ſeek the Face of another*, is, to deſire, and endeavour to obtain his Approbation, Favour, or Love.

THE Meaning of the Text, then, may be thus expreſſed: "If my People ſhall expreſs a "Senſe of their Preſumption, in violating my "Commandments——If they ſhall deſire, and "endeavour to obtain, my Favor and Protec-"tion, by turning from their wicked Ways, I will

" will forgive their Sin, by removing, from " their Land, the Calamities with which they " have been viſited."

THE Belief of this, naturally, diſpoſes every Friend to Society, to appoint, or embrace, every probable Mean of producing this Humiliation; and exciting the Deſire of recovering the divine Favour, in Times of publick Diſtreſs. Hence the numerous Appointments, mentioned in Scripture, of Days to be appropriated to the Confeſſion of Sin, and Deprecation of the divine Vengeance. Nor have theſe been confined to the Removal of Evils, already inflicted. When Vengeance has been denounced againſt a People; or public Calamities have appeared unavoidable, in the Courſe of Providence; a general Repentance, and Return to Duty have proved the Means of their being averted.

THIS was remarkable in the Caſe of Nineveh. When Jonah began to proclaim, that, after forty Days, Nineveh ſhould be overthrown; we are told that " the People be- " lieved God, and proclaimed a Faſt, and put " on Sackcloth, from the greateſt even to " the very leaſt; and, when the King heard " it, he cauſed to be proclaimed and publiſhed, " through Nineveh, ſaying; Let Man and " Beaſt be covered with Sackcloth, and cry " mightily unto God; yea, let them turn e- " very one from his evil Way, and from the " Violence that is in their Hands. Who can " tell if God will turn and repent, and turn " away from his fierce Anger, that we periſh " not."

" not." The Event, it is added, was conformable with his Deſire. " God ſaw their " Works, that they turned from their evil " Way, and God repented of the Evil which " he ſaid he would do unto them, and he did " it not."

THO' the Period of our Deſtruction is not limited, like that of Nineveh, to forty Days; yet, from the general Aſpect of public Affairs, Calamities of a very trying Kind, appear to be faſt approaching. We are, already, beginning to feel the dire Effects of that civil Diſcord, which rages on the Continent of America, in almoſt every Branch of our Commerce; and, ſhould War break out in Europe, we muſt, of Neceſſity, be involved in all its Horrors, and ruinous Conſequences. In ſuch alarming Circumſtances, it certainly becomes us to uſe every proper Mean for the Removal of preſent Evils, and the Averſion of ſuch as threaten us. And, to this Purpoſe, Days of public Humiliation, ſuch as the preſent, appear to be peculiarly adapted. That we, therefore, may attend to it, ſo as to derive Advantage from it, it is propoſed,

1ſt. To conſider, particularly, what Manner of Faſt God requireth, and will approve: And,

2dly. To offer ſome Conſiderations, deduced from our preſent Circumſtances, to engage us to hold ſuch a Faſt unto God.

FASTING,

FASTING, as appointed to the Jews, was to be rigidly obſerved, in its literal Senſe; and was, always, performed in the moſt humiliating Manner. A total Abſtinence from Food was abſolutely required; and the Perſon faſting clothed himſelf in Sack-cloth, and ſprinkled his Head with Aſhes, as Expreſſions of his Unworthineſs.

THESE Circumſtances were perfectly adapted to the rude and unpoliſhed Periods of Society, in which, every Thing ſpiritual, and abſtracted, is repreſented, and judged of, by external Signs. Such was the State of the Jews when their Law was given; and, for this Reaſon, a vaſt Variety of outward Obſervances was enjoined, either as expreſſive of inward Sentiments, or in Order to excite them. However, inſtead of conſidering theſe Appointments, in this Light, they overlooked the End, entirely, which they ought to have ſerved, and placed all their Religion in the outward Action. Their faſting, therefore, came to conſiſt in Slovenlineſs, Filth, and melancholic Looks. The Reaſon of this is very obvious. It was much eaſier to ſubmit to theſe, for an appointed Day, than to ſacrifice Ambition, Covetouſneſs, and Luſt, to a Senſe of Duty, and the Intereſts of Mankind. However, this was far from anſwering the Purpoſes which faſting was intended to ſerve, and is therefore diſapproved of by God in the plaineſt Manner. *Is it ſuch a Faſt*, ſaith he, *that I have choſen? For a Man to afflict his Soul for a Day? Is it to bow down his Head as a Bulruſh, and ſpread Sackcloth*

Sackcloth and Aſhes under him? Wilt thou call this a Faſt, and an acceptable Day to the Lord?

THESE Inquiries imply, not only, a ſtrong Denial of the Acceptableneſs of ſuch a Faſt; but a Charge of Abſurdity againſt the very Suppoſition. And, our Lord condemns ſuch Obſervances, attributes them to Hypocriſy, and recommends a Conduct directly contrary. *When ye faſt*, ſaith he, *be not, as the Hypocrites, of a ſad Countenance; for they diſfigure their Faces, that they may appear unto Men to faſt. Verily, I ſay unto you, they have their Reward. But thou, when thou faſteſt, anoint thine Head, and waſh thy Face; that thou appear not unto Men to faſt, but unto thy Father who is in ſecret; and thy Father who ſeeth in ſecret, will reward thee openly.*

As this Affectation of Sanctity, and external Humiliation, ſerves no better Purpoſe than to impoſe upon Mankind, it is juſtly exploded; and there is another Circumſtance, often connected with our religious Confeſſions, which deſerves to be ranked little higher. This is a general Acknowledgement of the Prevalence of Sin, and a fruitleſs Lamentation over the Wickedneſs of the World, without any Regard to *ourſelves*, or Endeavour to amend *it*. This, we find, was objected to the Jews by God himſelf, and a Declaration ſubjoined, that, after their public Acknowledgements, they returned, without any Senſe of Danger, to their wicked Purſuits. *I hearkened and heard*, ſaid he, *but they ſpake not aright: No Man repented him of his Wicked-*

Wickedneſs, ſaying, what have I done? but they turned, every one to his Courſe, as the Horſe ruſheth into the Battle.

FROM the Manner, in which this is ſpoken of, it is evident that our Humiliation ſhould proceed from a Senſe of our perſonal Tranſgreſſions; and that it ſhould lead us to ſeek the divine Approbation by turning from them, to the Practice of every Duty. Without this we may declaim, for ever, againſt the Iniquities of the World, without leſſening their Number—We may, even, *weep ſore, and our Eyes run down with Tears*, and, after all, find our faſting to be vain, and the Affliction of our Souls a Thing of Nought. Our Characters and Complaints, will be exactly the ſame with thoſe delineated by the Prophet, and the Anſwer to our Complaints, the ſame alſo. *They ſeek me daily, ſaith the Lord, and delight to know my Ways, as a Nation that did Righteouſneſs, and forſook not the Ordinance of their God; they aſk of me the Ordinance of Juſtice; they take Delight in approaching to God. Wherefore have we faſted, ſay they, and thou ſeeſt not? have we afflicted our Souls, and thou takeſt no Knowledge? Behold, in the Day of your Faſt, ye find Pleaſure, and exact all your Labors. Behold, ye faſt for Strife and Debate, and to ſmite with the Fiſt of Wickedneſs. Ye ſhall not faſt, as ye do this Day, to make your Voice to be heard on high. Is not this the Faſt that I have choſen? to looſe the Bands of Wickedneſs, to undo the heavy Burdens, and to let the oppreſſed go free, and that ye break every Yoke? Is it not to deal thy Bread to the hungry, and that thou bring*

the

the poor, that are caſt out, to thy Houſe? When thou ſeeſt the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyſelf from thine own Fleſh?

IT is not poſſible to expreſs in Words, plainer than theſe, the Nature and Effects of that Faſt which the Lord approveth. It is to be kept with an hearty Sorrow for every Sin, with which we are chargeable, and the Reſolution of performing every Duty, which our reſpective Stations require.

DO we believe that we are under the Inſpection and Government of God—That he hath revealed to us Statutes and Ordinances, that we ſhould obey them——And that unto him we muſt be accountable? And, do we charge ourſelves with Contempt of his Authority, or the Profanation of his holy Name? Have we ſerved the Cauſe of Injuſtice by wilful and deliberate Perjury? Have we endeavoured to ſupport a feeble Credit; or filled up the Vacancies of idle Diſcourſe, with ſenſeleſs Oaths and ſhocking Blaſphemies! Have we vented our impotent Rage, againſt thoſe who have offended us, in vile Imprecations, and infernal Curſes? Have we profaned the Sabbaths of God, forſaken the ſolemn Aſſemblies of his People, neglected his Worſhip, or deſpiſed his Ordinances, by which we ſhould have become ſtrong in him, and in the Power of his Might? In any of theſe Caſes, ſurely, it becomes us to humble ourſelves before God under a Senſe of ſuch Impiety, to repent us of our Wickedneſs, and, with ſolemn Supplication, to ſeek his Face.

HAVE

HAVE we failed in that Reſpect to our Parents which God and Nature jointly required? Or have we ſuffered thoſe tender little Ones, whom God hath committed to our Care, to grow up in Ignorance and Folly, ſavage and untamed, like the wild Aſs's Colt? Have we treated with Contempt the Ordinances of Juſtice; or deſpiſed thoſe whom God hath placed in Authority over us? Have we proſtituted our own Power, by ſtrengthening the Hands of Violence, or binding the Iron-yoke of Oppreſſion upon the Neck of the Unfortunate? Have we preyed upon the Houſe of the Widow, and the Fatherleſs, and him who had none to help? Have we taken Advantage of the poor Man's Diſtreſſes, to drive a gainful Bargain, and deprive him of his little All? Have we uſed Fraud in our common Dealings; or deprived others of their Property, by Theft, Cunning, Injuſtice, or open Violence? Have we, by deceitful Promiſes, and Proteſtations falſe as Hell, deprived the unſuſpecting Virgin of her Innocence, and the fond Heart of aged Parents of their deareſt Comfort? Have we borne Witneſs, falſely, againſt the Juſt, deprived him of his good Name, by malicious Inſinuations, or, in any Wiſe, reproached him, without a Cauſe? Have we wantonly ſported with the Peace of the Public, or promoted Strife and Contention? Have we delighted to ſmite with the Fiſt of Wickedneſs? Have we plotted to take away the Life of our Neighbour, or, at all, deviſed Miſchief againſt him? If our Hearts condemn us for theſe Things, we ought, not only, to humble

ble ourſelves, and pray, and reſolve againſt ſuch Offences, in Time to come; but to make Reparation for the Evils which we have done as far as poſſible. We ſhould remove the Reproach of the Innocent, by a Declaration of the Truth —We ſhould reveal the Miſchief deviſed againſt the Juſt—reſtore the Debtor his Pledge—and repay the unhallowed Gain of Fraud, Deceit, and Violence: *We ſhould looſe every Band of Wickedneſs, and break the Yoke of Oppreſſion.*

Were we, thus, humbled under a Senſe of our Sins, and our Hearts turned from our wicked Ways, we might expect, upon a ſure Foundation, that *God would hear our Prayers from Heaven, would forgive our Sins, and heal our Land,* as it is to this Humiliation and Return to Duty, that he hath annexed the Promiſe, not only, of Forgiveneſs, but of Proſperity, Honor, and every earthly Bleſſing.

Then, ſaith he, (*i. e.* when thou performeſt all theſe Things)——*Then ſhall thy Light break forth as the Morning, and thine Health ſhall break forth ſpeedily; and thy Righteouſneſs ſhall go before thee; the Glory of the Lord ſhall gather thee up. Then ſhalt thou call, and the Lord ſhall anſwer—Thou ſhalt cry, and he ſhall ſay, here I am. If thou take away, from the Midſt of thee, the Yoke, the putting forth of the Finger, and the ſpeaking Vanity: and if thou draw out thy Soul to the Hungry, and ſatisfy the afflicted Soul: then ſhall thy Light riſe in Obſcurity, and thy Darkneſs be as the Noon-day. And, the Lord ſhall guide thee continually, and ſatisfy thy Soul in Drought,*

Drought, and make fat thy Bones: and thou ſhalt be like a watered Garden, and a Spring of Water, whoſe Waters fail not. And they, that ſhall be of thee, ſhall build the old waſte Places: thou ſhalt raiſe up the Foundations of many Generations, and thou ſhalt be called, the Repairer of the Breach, the Reſtorer of Paths to dwell in. If thou turn away thy Foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy Pleaſure, on my holy Day, and call the Sabbath a Delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and ſhalt honour him, not doing thine own Ways, nor finding thine own Pleaſure, nor ſpeaking thine own Words. Then ſhalt thou delight thyſelf in the Lord, and I will cauſe thee to ride on the high Places of the Earth, and feed thee with the Heritage of Jacob thy Father: For the Mouth of the Lord hath ſpoken it.

WHEN we ſeriouſly attend to theſe Declarations, and the national Proſpects which they diſplay; and when we reflect *that the Mouth of the Lord hath ſpoken them*; how ſtrange doth it appear, that any People, who have the leaſt regard to their temporal Proſperity, laying Futurity aſide, ſhould ſuffer themſelves to be, almoſt, univerſally enſlaved by Luxury, Intemperance, and Senſuality—That they ſhould become openly prophane, unjuſt, oppreſſive, cruel, and unmerciful! Yet, ſo it has been; and, ſo it is, even now, with us.

I WOULD not, however, be underſtood to inſinuate, that we are now more wicked and profane, than ever any Nation was before. But, only, that Wickedneſs abounds too much;

and as the Wickedneſs of other Nations hath often been ſeverely puniſhed, in the Courſe of Providence, we have Reaſon to fear that we alſo ſhall be chaſtiſed. That we may be, only, chaſtiſed, and not entirely given over, ſhould be the Prayer of every one of us. Nor do I mean to charge every Individual, with Profanity, Intemperance, Fraud, Oppreſſion, Cruelty, and Violence. No! God be thanked, there are ſtill ſome, among us, who *love the Lord in Sincerity*, and *hate Iniquity*, I hope, *with a perfect Hatred*. Yet, that theſe are few, compared with the Workers of Iniquity, I may ſafely appeal to Experience—Nay, I appeal to your own Knowledge of the World, and the Feelings of your Hearts, for the Truth of the Fact.

As the general Conſiderations, deduced from Morality and Religion, have hitherto produced no good Effect upon ſuch——As they have not prevailed upon them, *to humble themſelves before God, and ſeek his Face, by turning from their wicked Ways*, We may now turn our Attention, a little more particularly, to our preſent Situation, and conſider what Motives it offers to engage us to a national Humiliation, and return to Duty.

And here, the State of our Affairs upon the Continent of America, firſt arreſts our Thoughts, and claims our Notice——A State of Affairs, gloomy, perplexed, and, truly, unpromiſing! There, War already rages with, even, more than its natural Horrors. Brother points the fatal Miniſter of Death againſt Brother, and Father

ther againſt Son; and Children imbrue their Hands in their Parents Blood. Nor, is that all. Should the Conteſt be prolonged, America muſt be ruined; and, in its Ruins, we muſt ſuffer. This is equally true, ſucceed who will, if the Sword muſt be the only Arbiter. If America ſupport her Independence, Commerce muſt be arreſted in her Channel, and, under the prodigious Expence of a fruitleſs Attempt to conquer, we muſt inevitably ſink. On the other Hand, ſhould the Arms of our King prove victorious, and drive the, now, enraged Americans, from all their ſtrong Holds, what muſt be the Conſequence? A prodigious Armament will be always neceſſary to keep them in Subjection, thro' ſuch an immenſe Territory, the Expence of which, I am afraid, will be greater than Britain and Ireland will be able to bear. Moreover, the Extent of the Continent, the Cover of the Woods, the numerous Fens, Moraſſes, Rivers, and dangerous Defiles, will enable them to keep up a conſtant Skirmiſhing, to execute Plots, and harraſs their enemies, in numberleſs Ways.

It is true, the Britiſh Arms may derive conſiderabe Aſſiſtance from the Co-operation of the Indian Nations. It is not to be ſuppoſed that their juſt Reſentment, againſt European Plunderers, will be lulled to Sleep, on ſuch an Occaſion; or that their known Sagacity will deſert them, when ſo fair an Opportunity offers of glutting their Revenge with Blood, and recovering their long-loſt Territories. But, what will be the Effect of this Aſſiſtance? We may

call it VICTORY for a Time; but it will prove to be *Depopulation*. The *Scalping-knife* and the *Hatchet* will come forth, at a Call; but it is only the Terror of more powerful Arms that can force them back into Peace. This the Americans have frequently experienced; and, if their Strength be once broken, it is natural to expect, that they will flee, for Shelter, to any Clime, however inhospitable, rather than be again exposed to savage Fury. Should this be the Case, what can remain to us, as the Fruits of our Conquest, but Savage Nations to re-conquer, and a barren Wilderness to replant with Colonies?

BUT, (Conjectures and bare Probabilities apart) does it not appear that we are already suffering, by the Restrictions of our Commerce, the Capture of our Vessels, and the growing Weight of our Taxes; and that, if the present Contest continues, we *must* suffer, more and more, every day? Should not these Things, then, engage us to inquire into the Source of our Sufferings, and endeavour to have them removed?

I DO not mean, that we should begin to discuss the political Questions so much agitated, concerning the Omnipotence of Parliament, the Rights of America, &c. &c. or to determine whether the Americans were forced into the present Opposition by illegal Extensions of Prerogative, and Claims of Power—or have rushed into Rebellion against Law, without a Cause. These are Inquiries for the Solution of which,

I frankly

I frankly confeſs, I have neither Taſte nor Inclination. They are, in many Circumſtances, by me unfathomable; as many of the Facts, on which their Solution depends, are yet veiled in thick Darkneſs.

WHAT is more; ſuch Inquiries would be to *us*, totally unprofitable. WE are ſo far removed from Power, that it cannot be ſuppoſed that our Opinions can ever enter a Council-chamber, or aſcend a Throne.—Or if they could, they muſt there be light as the Down, that floats in the Wind, or the Feather, which ſkims along the Deep.

FURTHER, from whatever Cauſe the preſent Diſtraction and Bloodſhed originated, the Effects are the ſame. Nor, are we to charge theſe Effects, *wholly*, either upon deſtructive Counſels, at home, or rebellious Diſpoſitions abroad. Moderation will readily admit that there may be, and indeed have been, Errors on both Sides. How vain, then, for us, to indulge our Rancour, or expoſe our Ignorance, by forming uncharitable, indigeſted Opinions; or venting Torrents of Scurrility, and abuſive Language, either againſt Adminiſtration, or its Opponents?

AGAIN; If we conſider this Matter in another, and, I am perſuaded, in its true Light, we will find Cauſe to look farther back, than we are generally willing to do, for the Source of our national Evils, and gloomy Proſpects. Tho' they may have immediately ariſen, either from

from wicked Counſels, and oppreſſive Meaſures; or from rebellious Diſpoſitions—Yet the evil Counſellors, or rebellious Subjects, may be raiſed up, as Inſtruments, in the Hand of God, for our Correction as a Nation; and our national Wickedneſs may be the true and ultimate Cauſe of all. I am ſure none of us can prove, ſatisfactorily, even to himſelf, that it is not. Yet every one of us ought to be aſſured that it is not; before we begin to look for, much more, lay the Blame upon another. Let us, therefore, carefully examine into our own Conduct, how far we have been chargeable with adding to the Guilt of the Nation, by our Tranſgreſſions—*Let us know, every one, the Plague of his* own *Heart*, and root *it* out, before we begin to arraign others. Then ſhall our Judgments be clear, and our Cenſures attended to. The Reaſoning and Advice of our Lord, upon another Occaſion, applies itſelf here with ſtrict Propriety. *Why beholdeſt thou the Mote that is in thy Brother's Eye, but conſidereſt not the Beam that is in thine own Eye? Or, how wilt thou ſay to thy Brother, let me pull the Mote out of thine Eye, and behold! a Beam is in thine own Eye? Thou Hypocrite, firſt caſt the Beam out of thine own Eye; and then thou ſhalt ſee clearly to caſt the Mote out of thy Brother's Eye.*

The Conſideration ariſing from this View of our preſent Situation is plainly this. That, as national Wickedneſs is the probable Cauſe of our divided Opinions, and diſtracted Counſels, and of that Confuſion, War, and Blood-ſhed which rage thro' our King's Dominions, we, as we

we tender the Reſtoration of Peace abroad, and Unanimity at Home—As we regard the Lives, Liberties, and Happineſs of ourſelves, and Brethren, *ſhould humble ourſelves, and pray unto God, and ſeek his Face, and turn from our wicked Ways.*

ANOTHER Circumſtance, from which this Conſideration derives no little Weight, is the ſeemingly, undetermined Diſpoſition of ſeveral European Courts, at preſent. Their Profeſſions, it is true, are full of Peace. Yet, that open Trade which is every where carried on, with the Inhabitants of America, contrary to ſpurious Prohibitions; and the powerful Armaments fitted out, in all the principal Ports of *France* and *Spain*, ſeem to announce approaching War. However, tho' we ſhould not be the immediate Objects of theſe Preparations; yet, if the preſent Diſpute between *Spain* and *Portugal* comes to an open Rupture; we muſt, of Neceſſity, be engaged in it, and ſhare its Conſequences. And, how fatal theſe might be to us, in our preſent diſtracted and defenceleſs Situation, is hard to ſay.

SHOULD either *France* or *Spain* be in a Capacity to invade us, they muſt, at preſent, meet with feeble Oppoſition. Not, that our Armies are leſs numerous, or leſs brave, than our Enemies have often found them; but, merely, becauſe they are diſperſed far and wide, and their Force divided. The Britiſh Arms may be juſtly comparad to a mighty Torrent, which, confined to a narrow Channel, burſts along with foaming

foaming Rage, and, with irreſiſtible Impetuoſity, beats down all Oppoſition; but diffuſed over a far extended Plain, loſes all its Force, and, with a languid Motion, faintly creeps along. Nor, is this All. Our Power is not only weakened, by Diviſion, but labors to deſtroy itſelf.

In this Situation, let us, for a Moment, ſuppoſe, (and Heaven forbid it ſhould ever be more than Suppoſition)——let us ſuppoſe, I ſay, that *France* or *Spain* ſhould invade our Land, and that their Arms ſhould be crowned with Succeſs. What muſt be the Conſequence to us? With all our Murmurs and Complaints, do we imagine, our Liberties would be extended, our Taxes diminiſhed, or our Properties better ſecured? Neither of theſe is the Caſe with the Subjects of either Power. And do we preſume, that their Attention to us would be more tender than they have ever ſhewn to others. Or that our Intereſts would be dearer to them than thoſe of their natural-born Subjects? Vain Thoughts!

The Truth is; we are never ſatisfied with our Condition; nor do we know the Value of our Bleſſings but by their Loſs. Do we not now enjoy the moſt extenſive Liberty of Thought, Word, and Action? We may publiſh every Sentiment of our Minds, in Speech, or Writing; and upon every Subject too, without Reſtraint. It is true, we are accountable for the Abuſe of this Liberty. But, then, we are not accountable to Men; but to Law, the Principles of which are founded in Equity, and the Expreſſions

Expreſſions unequivocal. Is this, then, the Caſe in *France*, or in *Spain*? Or would it be the Caſe with us, if ſubject to their Authority? No, certainly! Every Sentiment, which appears to imply Diſreſpect to any eſtabliſhed Form, whether in Religion or Politicks, muſt be accounted for to intereſted Men, and atoned for, by the Privation of Property, or Life.

WITH Reſpect to Taxes, nothing need be ſaid. In that Particular we are certainly more eaſily dealt with than any other Nation. And as to Property, the pooreſt Peaſant, in theſe Realms, has the Advantage of the greateſt Subject under arbitrary Governments. The meaneſt Cottage is, as, an impregnable Strong-hold to the Poſſeſſor, in which he defies the Iron-hand of Oppreſſion; and into which, even, Law itſelf dares not, violently, enter. How enviable is ſuch a Situation, compared with the moſt exalted Rank, where the moſt princely Fortune may be deſtroyed, in a Moment, by the almighty Word of an arbitrary Monarch! And the poor Man's little ALL reduced to Nothing, by the Covetouſneſs of an artful Financier, or the Rapacity of a Farmer-general! And, yet, ſuch a Change of Situation muſt we feel, ſhould an Invaſion take Place, and be attended with Succeſs.

THERE is yet another Circumſtance, in which we muſt ſuffer intolerably, if we retain the leaſt Degree of Senſibility, or Regard to our Dignity as rational Beings. We muſt deny ourſelves the Uſe of our nobleſt Powers, and impli-

implicitly reſign our moſt valuable Privileges—We muſt renounce Reaſon, make over Conſcience to a deſigning Prieſt, reſign the Bible to be ſealed up, for ever, and devoutly kneeling, at the Shrine of Infallibility, receive with Thankfulneſs, our ſpiritual Chains—We muſt, at once, forego all thoſe Privileges which our Fore-fathers purchaſed with their Blood, and in the peaceable Enjoyment of which we have long been happy. In a Word, we muſt embrace Popery, with all its abſurdities; or encounter Death with all the Terrors which Malice can deviſe.

Let us, then, ſeriouſly aſk ourſelves, whether we would willingly ſubmit to theſe Things. Tho' we often act contrary to Reaſon, and labor to ſilence the Voice of Conſcience, would we feel no Reluctance in diſclaiming the Guidance of Reaſon and Conſcience, altogether?——Tho' we treat Religion with Indifference, neglect its Appointments, and violate its ſacred Precepts for every fleeting Gratification, or trifling Gain, could we freely renounce the Name and Profeſſion of it, all at once? Tho' we ſeldom open the Book of God for religious Inſtruction, and more ſeldom ſtill, to form our Tempers, and regulate our Actions by its heavenly Influence, could we voluntarily reſign it into the Hands of another, or ſuffer it to be wreſted from us, for ever? Until we can ſubmit to theſe Things, without Reluctance, we ſhould endeavour, by every Mean, to prevent our being expoſed to them: And, ſurely, the moſt effectual Mean, for this Purpoſe, is to improve

prove our preſent Privileges, and act a Part truly becoming them—to be good Men, good Subjects, good Neighbours, and good Chriſtians.

FROM our preſent Proſpects, then, as a Nation profeſſing Religion, the Conſideration is plainly this: That, as we value Liberty of Conſcience and private Judgment—as we value the Bible, its ſacred Contents, and the Privilege of reading, judging of, and worſhipping God according to it; In a Word, as we regard the Intereſts of Proteſtantiſm, and deſire to continue in the Poſſeſſion of it, we ſhould *humble ourſelves before God, and ſeek his Face, and turn from our wicked Ways*, in Hope that *he will hear from Heaven, and forgive our Sins and heal our Land.*

BUT, perhaps, it may be aſked; *Will theſe Things, really, avail us? If our Enemies be diſpoſed to invade, or enſlave us, will our Humiliation, Prayers, and Repentance prevent them from putting their Deſigns in Execution?* I freely anſwer; They probably may; and, if not, they will certainly tend to defeat their Intentions.

A BRIEF Obſervation, or two, will plainly illuſtrate theſe Aſſertions.

1ſt. WHEREVER a Senſe of Religion and private Virtue prevails, in a Nation, public Virtue, and a Deſire of promoting the general Good are in exact Proportion; and theſe muſt ever render a Nation formidable. Accordingly,

we find from Experience, that, in every Age, a few virtuous and brave Men, equally Strangers to Luxury and Corruption, have led in Chains the moſt numerous Armies compoſed of the Luxurious, Effeminate, and Debauched: And the Vices of ſuch have done more, towards their being conquered, than the Power of their Enemies. If our Return, then, to Duty, will recover our public Spirit, and replant the Principles of true Patriotiſm within us, is it not probable that upon ſuch a Foundation our Councils will be unanimous, and our Arms Objects of ſecret dread, rather than of Contempt——— That our Enemies will view us with Jealouſy, or Fear, rather than with the vain Preſumption of triumphing over us?

2dly. VICE, in its own Nature, tends to enervate the Mind, unhinge its Reſolution, and inſpire a ſervile Fear of, WE KNOW NOT WHAT; Whilſt Virtue invigorates every Principle, inſpires Fortitude, and fills the Soul with cheering Hopes, and Confidence, more than earthly. Suppoſe, then, that our Return to Virtue ſhould not ſecure us againſt hoſtile Force ——And that our Enemies ſhould attempt to enſlave us; will not our Senſe of Virtue inſpire us with Confidence?——And will not that Confidence invigorate our Arms, and enable us to exert ourſelves with a Firmneſs, more than human? Will it not, probably, realize to our View, what the wiſe Man, long ago, aſſerted? —That *the Wicked fleeth when no Man purſueth; but the Righteous is bold as a Lion?*

3dly,

3dly. As God is the Ruler of all Things, and diſpoſeth of every Event as ſeemeth good unto him——As the *Hearts of all Fleſh are in his Hand*, and, *he turneth them whitherſoever he pleaſeth, like the Rivers of Waters*——And, as he hath ever declared his Intention of favoring the Righteous, is it not probable, that, upon our Repentance and Return to Duty, he will *bring to Nought the Counſel of our Enemies, and render vain the Device of the Crafty?*

THESE Obſervations plainly ſhew the Probability that our Repentance *will* avail us? and that *if we turn from our wicked Ways, God will hear our Prayers, forgive our Sins, and heal our Land.*

THE Sum of all which hath been offered upon this Subject, amounts to this; That in Order to the Deliverance of a Nation from preſent Diſtreſſes, or its Eſcape from thoſe with which it may be threatened, God certainly requires a national Repentance, and return from Wickedneſs; and that it is ſuch a Faſt, as is attended with this Change of Temper and Conduct, of which he will approve.

LET us apply this, then, to ourſelves; And, as we deſire that a Stop may be put to the Effuſion of proteſtant Blood—that civil Diſcord may ceaſe, and Peace be reſtored, with all its Bleſſings, to every Member of this far-extended Empire—As we deſire that Tyranny, Oppreſſion, and arbitrary Power, ſhould be baniſhed

from our Land, and that Rebellion ſhould be extinguiſhed, for ever—And, as we deſire to be preſerved from foreign Invaſion, and maintained in the peaceable Poſſeſſion of our Lives, Liberties, and Religion—as we deſire theſe Things, let us, from this Day, be employed in examining our Hearts, rooting out vicious Affections, and reſolving that we will henceforth walk as it becometh rational Beings and Chriſtians—— That we will be humble, and devout, and turn from every wicked Way, animated with the pleaſing Hope, that God will, then, hear our Prayers from Heaven, his Dwelling-place, forgive our paſt Sins, heal our Land in its preſent Diſtractions, and preſerve it from all ſuch Diſorders in Time to come. AMEN.

SER-

SERMON II.

ON THE

RUINOUS EFFECTS OF CIVIL WAR,

PREACHED BEFORE THE PROTESTANT DISSENTING CONGREGATION OF BALLYHALBERT, FEBRUARY 27th, 1778, BEING A DAY APPOINTED, BY GOVERNMENT, AS A GENERAL FAST.

SERMON II.

II SAMUEL, II. 26.

Then ABNER *called to* JOAB *and ſaid, Shall the Sword devour for ever? Knoweſt thou not that it will be Bitterneſs in the latter End? How long ſhall it be, then, 'ere thou bid the People return from following their Brethren?*

IT is extremely obſervable that the moſt important Revolutions in human Affairs generally take their Riſe from trivial Occurences, and are forwarded by Means which human Wiſdom would, in moſt Caſes, pronounce inadequate. Of theſe we have a remarkable Inſtance in the Hiſtory of David. From attending a few Sheep in the Wilderneſs, he was, in a few Years, promoted to a Throne, tho' he does not appear, in any Inſtance, to have courted Preferment, or indulged a Sentiment ariſing from Ambition.

His

His Triumph over the Champion of Gath recommended him, early, to the Notice of Saul, and the Armies of Iſrael; and the Zeal which he afterwards diſplayed in their Intereſts, in the moſt perilous Circumſtances, fully proved that he was worthy of their Regard. Yet this very Zeal, and the Succeſs with which it was attended, in a ſhort Time, provoked Saul to Jealouſy, and frequent Attempts againſt the Life of David. This obliged David to retire from the Court of Iſrael, and take Shelter in the Wilderneſs, where he lived under continual Apprehenſions, until the Death of Saul.

This Event, as appears, put an End to all his Fears, as he immediately bethought him of returning from the Land of the Philiſtines, in which a Portion had been aſſigned him; and, by the Direction of Heaven, he ſettled in Hebron, where be was anointed King of Judah, by the unanimous Voice of the Men of that Tribe. As this was an Honor to which he did not aſpire, it is highly probable he would have ſitten down contented, without endeavouring to extend his Dominion over the other Tribes.

But Abner, Commander in Chief of the Armies of Iſrael, marched out to Gibeon with his Men, to reduce Judah to the Authority of Iſhboſheth, whom he had made King. There he was met by Joab who came forth to ſupport the Claims of David, and the Choice of his Tribe. A Battle enſued, in which Abner was defeated; and when his Army was tired with Flight, he collected the ſhattered Remains of his

his vanquiſhed Hoſt on a riſing Ground, and as Joab advanced in Purſuit, he addreſſed him in the Words of the Text: *Shall the Sword devour for ever? Knoweſt thou not that it will be Bitterneſs in the latter End? How long ſhall it be then e're thou bid the People return from following their Brethren?*

HOWEVER ſuſpicious the Character of Abner may appear from other Paſſages in Scripture, theſe Inquiries, and the Reflections which they ſuggeſt, beſpeak him a Man of Underſtanding, Humanity, and Addreſs. That he had his Vices cannot be doubted. The Matter is ſufficiently plain from his criminal Intercourſe with Rizpah the Concubine of his late Maſter; and the Violence of his Reſentment againſt Iſhboſheth, who charged him with his Crime.

WITH all this Extravagance of Reſentment, he was certainly poſſeſſed of an almoſt unbounded Generoſity, and Tenderneſs of Heart—— the inſeparable Companions of true Courage. Of theſe we have the moſt ſtriking Inſtance, which Hiſtory affords, in his Conduct towards Aſahel the Brother of Joab. This young Man, elated with the Succeſs of his Brother's Arms, and confiding in his Swiftneſs, was intent upon the Atchievement of ſome grand Exploit, which might recommend him to his Prince; and Vanity prompted him to purſue Abner with the Hope of triumphing over him. With this View he burſt from his Ranks, and, with *the Swiftneſs of a Roe upon the Mountains*, began his Purſuit. Abner perceived his Approach, and concluding,

cluding, from his Appearance, that he was of more than ordinary Rank, inquired, whether he was Aſahel. He was anſwered in the Affirmative; and, inſtead of cheriſhing a mean Revenge, or exulting in the Opportunity which offered of cutting off a youthful Enemy, whoſe Activity, Courage, and Love of military Glory promiſed ſo much, he eyed him with Pity, and generouſly exhorted him to deſiſt from an Attempt ſo vain——Nay, what is more, he cheriſhed that honeſt Ardor, with which he preſſed forward, by directing him to an Enemy ſuited to his Strength, and whoſe Arms ſhould be the Reward of his Valor. Aſahel, blinded by Ambition, diſdained the Advice, and preſſed forward as to certain Conqueſt. Abner repeated it with additional Warmth, and urged the Confuſion of Face with which he would approach Joab with Propoſitions of Peace, if the Raſhneſs of Aſahel obliged him to Violence. However, Aſahel was not to be reſtrained. Experience had not yet taught him Wiſdom; nor Reflection moderated the Ardor of his Youth. He probably attributed the Counſels of Friendſhip to the Influence of Fear, and the Deſire of eſcaping impending Fate: So he ſtill preſſed forward till the generous Abner was obliged, in his own Defence, to ſmite him to the Ground.

THE ſacred Hiſtorian's artleſs Relation of this melancholy Scene is truly pathetic. "There were three Sons of Zeruiah there, "Joab and Abiſhai, and Aſahel; and Aſahel "was light of Foot as a wild Roe. And Aſa-"hel purſued after Abner, and, in going, he "turn-

" turned not to the right Hand, nor to the left,
" from following Abner. Then Abner looked
" behind him, and ſaid: Art thou Aſahel? and
" he ſaid; I am. And Abner ſaid to him, turn
" thee aſide, to thy right Hand, or to thy left,
" and lay thee hold of one of the young Men
" and take thee his Armour. But Aſahel would
" not turn aſide from following him. And Ab-
" ner ſaid again to Aſahel, turn thee aſide from
" following me: Wherefore ſhould I ſmite thee
" to the Ground? How, then, ſhould I hold
" up my Face to Joab thy Brother? Howbeit,
" he refuſed to turn aſide: Wherefore Abner,
" with the hinder End of his Spear ſmote him
" under the fifth Rib that the Spear came out
" behind him; and he fell down there, and di-
" ed in the ſame Place!"

THIS Conduct of Abner tends to aſcertain, not only his general Character, but the particular Principles which induced him, thus, to addreſs Joab, and call his Attention to the Horrors of the deſtructive War in which they were engaged. In this perſonal Fear could have no Part, as his Valor was acknowledged, even, by his Enemies; nor could the Cauſe in which he fought be deemed deſperate from a ſingle Repulſe. His Overtures of Peace proceeded entirely from Humanity, and a Regard to the Intereſts of Iſrael. He knew that if *the Sword continued to devour*, the common Intereſt muſt ſuffer, and their Hands be weakened: And the very Scene in which he had been perſonally engaged would give additional Bitterneſs to the Thoughts of ſhedding kindred Blood, and completing, by their

their own Hands, what their Enemies had labored in Vain to effect. The intemperate Ardor of Aſahel, which Time and Experience would have matured—his Thirſt of Glory—Contempt of Danger—and towering Ambition would all ruſh upon his Mind, and lead his Imagination to ſome future Period, when theſe might have been ſignalized againſt the Enemies of Iſrael. This would ſuggeſt the Conſideration how many ſuch had periſhed by the Hands of Brethren ——And this, again, the Evils which would ariſe from their Loſs, when the Inhabitants of the Land would come up againſt them, as of old, to rob their thraſhing-Floors—drive away their Flocks and their Herds—burn their Cities with Fire—lead their Wives and their Daughters into Captivity—and daſh their little Ones againſt the Stones. Such Conſiderations, as theſe, appear to have engroſſed his Mind, and ſuggeſted the Reflections in the Text, and the Propoſals of Peace couched under them. *Shall the Sword devour for ever? Knoweſt thou not that it will be Bitterneſs in the latter End? How long ſhall it be, then, e're thou bid the People return from following their Brethren?*

To a Mind ſoftened with Humanity, theſe Reflections are perfectly natural. The Horrors of War are always ſhocking, and its End, God knows, is bitter enough. However weighty the Grievances, or galling the Injuries which rouſe Reſentment——however preſſing the Neceſſity which unſheathes the Sword, the Havock, Rapine, and Deſolation which mark its Steps are truly dreadful: Fear and diſmal Apprehenſion far

far outrun the Approach of an Enemy; Cruelty, in the Form of military Diſcipline, keeps Pace with their Advances; and Poverty, Famine, and Death follow cloſe behind. Nor is the Soldier, whoſe every Act is attributed to Barbarity, leſs pitiable than the unfortunate Wretch whoſe Morſel he hath devoured, whoſe Cottage he hath left in Flames, and the Fruits of whoſe Fields or Gardens he hath trodden under foot. While the Duty of his Profeſſion obliges him to the painful Deeds, the Feelings of a Man croud in upon him, his Heart melts, and the Fear of Sympathy ſteals ſoftly down his Cheek. The ſcanty Morſel which his Neceſſity extorted from defenceleſs Age, or ſtruggling Childhood, *tho' ſweet to his Palate*, becomes, from a Moment's Reflection, *bitter as Worm-wood*.

But, if we attend him to the Field of Blood, where embattled Hoſts are ſet in Array, Horrors, more gloomy ſtill, await him. Man ſtands oppos'd to Man—Spear to Spear—and Bow to Bow. The Artillery of Death is poiſed—a dreadful Shout, from every Quarter, proclaims the Onſet—Death rages thro' the Ranks—and ſtrews the Field with ſlain—while all the neighbouring Streams are ſwollen with Blood. And, tho' theſe Things ſcarcely arreſt his Eye, or command his Attention, while the Clang of Arms, and the Trumpet's martial Sound fill his Ear, and the Thirſt of Glory hurries him on to Conqueſt: Yet, when theſe ceaſe to operate—when under the Influence of calm Reflection he reviews the bloody Field——When he beholds

here

here an hoary Veteran, who had long flouriſhed as the Guardian of his Country, covered over with honourable Wounds, and terrible, even, in Death——*There* the Strength of Manhood, to which a loving Wife and prattling Babes looked up for Succour and Protection, laid low in the Duſt—a little farther a blooming Youth, whom the Love of his Country had forced from a tender Mother's fond Embrace, breathing his laſt——And, all around, an undiſtinguiſhed Multitude, whoſe mangled Bodies, ghaſtly Looks, and piercing Cries thrill the Soul with Horror—When he traverſes the now deſolated Plains, which he ſaw ſo lately waving with Plenty, and views the mournful Ruins of the ſplendid Manſions where Peace, Love, and Feſtivity reigned ——When he beholds, under ſome venerable Tree, the cold Remains of hoary Age from whoſe trembling Hand he had extorted the laſt Morſel——When the Cries of the Widow, whom the Loſs of a tender Huſband, and the famiſhed Looks of the little Pledges of his Love, have driven to Diſtraction, pierce his Ear, his martial Rage ſubſides, Humanity triumphs, and, in the Bitterneſs of his Soul, he execrates Ambition, which makes ſuch Havock thro' the Works of God.

YET theſe are only the Horrors common to War, in its ordinary Form. A darker Gloom overſhadowed the Proſpects of Abner, and effects more melancholy muſt have enſued, had the Sword continued to devour. However dreadful the Ravages of War may be, its Barbarities are never ſo ſhocking, as when it riots

in

in kindred Blood: And, in the Caſe before us, the Connection was peculiarly tender. The Parties contending were but a few Generations removed from the common Parent which gave them Birth: and their Relation was cemented by a Variety of Circumſtances. Frequent Inter-marriages, a Community of Goods for many Years, a Participation of various Diſtreſſes, fighting together in the Battles of the Lord, the Peculiarities of their Religion, and a common Intereſt in the divine Promiſes, all tended to bind them together by the Cords of Love. And the four hundred Men whoſe Debts, Diſtreſſes, or Diſaffection to the Family of Saul, had driven them to join David in his Exile, and who then advanced to fight in his Cauſe, were, no doubt, ſeverally related to the different Tribes. How bitter, then, muſt the Conflict have been where Father ſtood oppoſed to Son, and Brother to Brother! Where the Spear of the Youth, juſt ripened into Man, was pointed at the Breaſt of the Veteran, who *firſt taught his Hands to war, and his Fingers to fight!* Where the Father's Sword returned drenched in the Blood of a Son to whom he had fondly looked forward as the Prop of his declining Age —Where a Brother's Hand conſigned a Brother to Death; or rendered a beloved Siſter a Widow, and her Children fatherleſs! How melancholy the Review of the bloody Field, where among the thouſands dead and dying, the Face of an Enemy was not to be ſeen!—Where every Viſage recalled the Idea of ſome common Mercy, tender Connection, or endearing Act of Kindneſs! And, how bitter, even, the Thoughts

of Victory, tho' in Favor of Abner, when all that Triumph could have boaſted was that *the Lion of the Tribe of Judah was vanquiſhed, and a Tribe cut off from Iſrael?*

WHILE Humanity and Religion thus inclined Abner to ſue for Peace, ſound Policy juſtified his Conduct, which the very Exiſtence of Iſrael as a People rendered neceſſary. When they forced their Way into Paleſtine they were oppoſed by all the Inhabitants of the Land. They ſecured the Territories, which they then poſſeſſed, by an almoſt total Extirpation of ſome of the Nations; and the Severities, which they were obliged to uſe, rendered them odious to all their Neighbours. Many of theſe appear, at this Time, to have recovered their Strength, and become formidable. It was but a ſhort Time before that the Philiſtines alone had defeated the united Strength of Iſrael, and ſlain their King with his three Sons. And it is natural to ſuppoſe that they, and all the other Nations, whom the Iſraelites had expelled from their Poſſeſſions, would have beholden the Ravages of civil Diſcord with a malicious Pleaſure, and, while the Sword continued to devour, looked forward, with anxious Expectation, to the Day when each, exhauſted in the Conteſt, would retire weak and diſſatisfied. And when this Day had arrived, with what Elation of Mind would they have ruſhed on to revenge the Blood of their Fathers—to recover their long loſt Territories, pleaſant and fruitful as the Garden of God—and to cruſh the reduced Strength of a People, whoſe growing Greatneſs they had viewed

viewed with Envy, and whoſe Succeſſes had filled the Nations with Terror!

WHEN Abner looked forward to theſe Things, and conſidered them as the certain Conſequences of their civil Commotions, he might juſtly appeal to Joab, whether, if continued, their End would not be Bitterneſs.

YET, whatever Pain might ariſe from the general Idea of ſuch a Revolution, the particular Circumſtances of that People would greatly encreaſe it. They had been led from Captivity by the Hand of God, and grown up to a mighty People under his immediate Care. They had been accuſtomed to fight, as under the Banners of Heaven, and to triumph over all Oppoſition. They were animated by many Promiſes, which pointed forward to future Glories; and the Proſpect of their Accompliſhment inſpired them with towering Hopes, and fired their Ambition. How bitter, then, muſt have been the Recollection of their paſt Succeſſes, when they would ſee their Enemies breaking in upon them like a Torrent, their Habitations laid waſte, their Cities in Flames, their Wives and their Daughters led into Captivity, to quench the Luſt of ſavage Conquerors, and their young Men condemned to the Sword! When the Objects of their Ambition would be removed, and their Hopes levelled with the Duſt!——When inſtead of joyful Acclamations and Songs of Triumph, Deriſion, Scorn, and Ridicule would purſue them cloſe!—*When their Enemies would ſhoot out the Lip, and ſhake the Head, ſaying,*

Theſe are the mighty Ones of the Earth, who conquered the Nations, boaſted that their Victories were from above, and truſted in the Lord, that he would deliver them. Let him deliver them, ſeeing he delighteth in them.

BUT the bittereſt Ingredient in this bitter Cup would have been the Reflection that theſe Evils proceeded, not from any increaſe of Power, new Connection, or formidable Alliance among their Enemies; but, from their own intemperate Graſpings after Power, internal Broils, and miſguided Valor, which had cut off the Flower of their Youth, and left them weak and defenceleſs—an eaſy Prey to the firſt Invader.

WHOEVER attends to theſe Things, for a Moment, and enters into the melancholy Scenes which they muſt have diſcloſed to the Imagination of Abner, will be ready, not only to acknowlege the Propriety of his Conduct, but to load with Bleſſings the Memory of the Man of Peace, by whoſe Wiſdom and Humanity Death and Deſolation were checked in their wild Career, and a mighty Nation preſerved from Deſtruction.

THE Circumſtances of Iſrael thus divided againſt itſelf, as well as the Occaſion of this Day, naturally ſuggeſt the Thoughts of our own Situation, and the War, ſo ſhocking to Humanity, and ruinous to our Intereſts, which now rages thro' the American Continent.

THO'

THO' it be painful, in general, to trace Similarities of this Kind, yet the Likeneſs is ſo ſtriking, in the Caſe before us, that it is impoſſible to review the Conteſt in Iſrael, and, at the ſame Time, exclude the Thoughts of our own. The ſame tender Connection ſubſiſts between the contending Parties; and the ſame Circumſtances of Horror attend the Ravages of the devouring Sword. A few Generations lead us back to the Origin of American Colonization, when the Inhabitants of the Britiſh Iſles firſt explored its pathleſs Deſarts, in Queſt of that Liberty and Peace which their Country denied them: And every ſucceeding Year has tranſported Multitudes from every Corner of theſe Lands, ſo that there is ſcarcely a Proteſtant Family, of the middle and lower Claſſes among us, who does not reckon Kindred with the Inhabitants of that extenſive Continent. How many Parents, in the narrow Circle of our own Acquaintance, are agitated with the moſt painful Anxiety for the uncertain Fate of favorite Children whoſe Habitations have become the Seat of War; and againſt whom the Profeſſion of a Soldier hath obliged an Acquaintance, Friend, or Brother to go forth! How many who fight, on either Side, feel the dreadful Apprehenſion of ſhedding kindred Blood! And theſe Apprehenſions derive additional Terrors from the improved Artillery of Death. In ancient Times, while the Sword or Spear decided the Conteſt, the Features of a Friend might be diſtinguiſhed in the Combat, and the fatal Blow turned aſide. But now the Manner and Place of Attack, the uncertain Aim,

Intervention

Intervention of Smoke, and many other Circumſtances render this impoſſible. Friend and Foe are equally expoſed, fall promiſcuous, and often lie undiſtinguiſhed.

Nor are the Violations of private Friendſhip and ſocial Obligation leſs obvious, or terrible, in the preſent Conflict. In the late War, many of the Forces who now fight (to uſe a favorite Expreſſion) *to lay America at the Feet of the Miniſtry*, fought, on the ſame Ground, for nobler Purpoſes—to repreſs the Inſolence of French Policy, and repel the Incurſions of ſavage Fury—to baniſh Slavery from the Colonies, and extend the Intereſt and Glory of Britain. And, as the Operations of War have, in great Part, proceeded in the ſame Line, many, who formerly rejoiced in Offices of mutual Friendſhip, or fought together in the common Cauſe, muſt now meet in hoſtile Array, and feel the Effects of mutual Enmity. What muſt be the Feelings of the Coloniſt when he beholds the Briton who repelled the Tomahawk and Scalping-knife from his Borders, and reſtored him to his Family, Habitation, Liberty, and Peace, ruſhing foremoſt to drive off his Flocks or his Herds, plunder his Granaries, or lay his Dwelling in Flames! And, what the Feelings of the Briton, while he recollects, in the ſmoaking Ruins, the now deſolated Manſion under whoſe hoſpitable Roof he had ſheltered his weary Limbs; while he perceives that his Hand hath reduced to Beggary, the Youth, who had watched over his ſtolen Slumbers; or the Virgin, who, with tender Hand,

Hand, had applied Balſam to the Wounds under which he languiſhed!

YET, even theſe ſcarcely deſerve the Name of Sorrows when compared with thoſe which ariſe from a Review of the ſlaughtered Hoſts, with which a Day of Battle ſtrews the Ground. Would we form an Idea of theſe let us conſider how many Natives of America, who were Hewers of Wood and Drawers of Water to Britiſh Troops——How many, who bravely ſhared the Dangers and Fatigues of War with Britons, and fought by their Sides——And how many Britons, who, at the Concluſion of Peace, married Daughters of the Land, and ſat down to enjoy the Fruits of the Fields which they had enriched with their Blood, now fight in the Cauſe of America, and ſupport her Claims. In the Multitudes who have been ſlain many of theſe may certainly be numbered; and, in the different Engagements, many Britons muſt have fallen by their Hands. What, then, muſt be the Diſtreſſes of the Briton, when he beholds the Man who had aſſiſted his Arms, levelled the Foreſts before him, or, by ſome ſecret Path, directed his wandering Steps, thro' Moraſſes, Deſarts, and dangerous Defiles, to Security, or Conqueſt, ſlaughtered by his Hand! Or, of the American when he beholds the mangled Remains of the Avenger of his Wrongs, the Protector of his Infant Offſpring, or the Inſtructor of his Youth, who *firſt taught his Fingers to fight*, and finally to conquer, and whom Neceſſity hath obliged him to ſacrifice to his Country! Will he not be ready to exclaim with Lamech; *I*

have

have ſlain a Man to my Wounding, and a young Man to my Hurt? Or, to take up the pathetic Lamentation of David over Saul and his beloved Jonathan: *The Beauty of Iſrael is ſlain: How are the mighty fallen in the Midſt of the Battle! I am diſtreſſed for thee, my Brother! How are the mighty fallen, and the Weapons of War periſhed!*

HOWEVER, theſe Barbarities are not more ſhocking to Humanity, or diſtreſſing to the Individuals immediately concerned, than repugnant againſt ſound Policy. Whatever deprives a Father of a Son, or a Wife of an Huſband, robs Society of Part of its Wealth; and whatever takes away the Life of a Soldier diminiſhes its Strength. Nor is this all. Whatever excites civil Commotions, and internal Diſcord, is ſtill worſe. It not only deprives a State of Part of its Strength; but adds ſo much to the Power of its Enemies; and often effects what they have long attempted in vain. That we have already ſuffered, in this Particular, is abundantly evident: Nor are we to eſtimate our Loſs by the Numbers who have fallen in attempting to ſubdue America. Every Individual who hath loſt his Life, on either Side, is to be conſidered as loſt to Britain. And that theſe have been ſo numerous as materially to affect our Strength and Security cannot be denied.

IT is true, indeed, that if we were ſo uncommonly happy as to be ſurrounded entirely by Friends, on whoſe peaceable Intentions we could ſafely depend for many Years to come, theſe Things

Things would not ſo immediately endanger us. Time might repleniſh our Treaſuries, recruit our Armies, and render us again reſpectable. But this is not the Caſe. Hitherto we have had Enemies, and Enemies we have ſtill: Nor are we to ſuppoſe that their Enmity has ceaſed, becauſe they have not formally commenced Hoſtilities againſt us. Tho' France and Spain may preſerve a nominal Neutrality, while America is able to ſupport her Independence, it is not to be doubted, but their united Force will be exerted againſt us, as ſoon as Neceſſity may require, or a Proſpect of Succeſs may open to encourage them. The Recollection of the Events of the laſt War, and the Loſſes which they ſuſtained, will powerfully plead for ſuch a Meaſure, and rouſe them to Revenge. While every Quarter of the Globe recalls the Idea of Misfortunes——While the Plains of Germany remind them of flying Multitudes, and Rivers gorged with Slain—While the Wilds of America echo their Defeats—Africa proclaims their Diſgrace—and every Latitude thro' which they paſs renews the painful Remembrance of Fleets beaten, deſtroyed, or put to Flight, we cannot ſuppoſe that they have ceaſed to mourn their Loſſes, regret the extenſive Territories from which they were driven, or to wiſh for an Opportunity of recovering their Poſſeſſions.

SHOULD we, then, perſevere, in our preſent Meaſures, till our Armies be deſtroyed, and America loſt, will not the Recollection of theſe Things whet their Revenge, animate their Councils, and invigorate their Arms! And,

ſhould Providence permit them to prevail over us, with what Haughtineſs of Spirit would they proclaim their Triumphs, and inſult our Wretchedneſs! "Theſe are the Heroes of the Age, "before whom the Nations bowed; who claim-"ed the Sovereignty of the Ocean; and boaſted "that their Victories and their Empire extend-"ed from Pole to Pole! But, now, their "Strength is become Weakneſs; their Laurels "have faded; and their far-extended Empire is "ſhaken from it's Foundations!"

SUCH Reflections as theſe are ſufficiently mortifying, from whatever Cauſes the Calamities ſpring which give them birth; yet, they might ſtill be ſupported, could we reſolve them into any acquired Strength, new Connection, or formidable Alliance among our Enemies. But, when a Moment's Reflection will remind us that they originated from our Folly or Wickedneſs—that it coſt us a painful Struggle of ſeveral Years, a Profuſion of Treaſures, and the Blood of Thouſands, to lay their Foundations——Nay, that we were obliged to ranſack Europe for a Troop of Mercenaries to preſs us down to Ruin; the Feelings of Remorſe become envenomed as the Stings of Scorpions. Then, the Recollection of the Liberties we poſſeſſed, the Plenty in which we rejoiced, the Pinacle of Glory, on which we ſtood, the Victories which followed our Standards, and the Terror of our Arms, which held in Awe the vanquiſhed Nations, will ſerve, only, to imbitter our Reflections, and mingle new Ingredients with our Cup of Wretchedneſs.

I KNOW,

I KNOW, it is alleged by ſome, that theſe Apprehenſions are groundleſs, and the Evils imaginary to which they point. To ſupport this Allegation it is ſaid, not only, that the Declarations of France and Spain are full of Peace; but, that, if their Intentions were unfriendly, they are not in a Capacity of putting them into Execution. This laſt Aſſertion, however, requires more Evidence than hath yet been produced to give it Credit. The general Levy of Troops through both Kingdoms, the Strength of their Fleets at home, and Reinforcement of thoſe abroad, neither indicate Weakneſs nor Diſpoſitions to Peace. They rather give Reaſon to conclude, that they are in a Capacity of annoying us; and, that, their not doing ſo, is the Effect of Policy, not Weakneſs.

BUT, when all, that is here alleged, is taken for granted——When we ſuppoſe that our Enemies are really incapable of deſtroying us immediately, our Apprehenſions are not, on that Account, altogether groundleſs. If we may reaſon from what is paſt, America may continue her Reſiſtance a few Campaigns longer; and, if it does ſo, France may continue to talk of Peace, while ſhe prepares for War. Each of theſe few Campaigns will weaken our Hands, while her's become ſtrong: And, the very Trade which we have forced into her Ports will accelerate her Progreſs, and ſupply her largely with the Sinews of War. Nor, is it improbable that the Experience of this will induce her, when Neceſſity requires, to unſheathe

her Sword for the Support of America, and Protection of her Commerce. Theſe Allegations, therefore, imply no more, than that our Enemies cannot, probably, effect to day, what a few Years may render eaſy, or even accompliſh to their Hands. But, is our Situation, therefore, free from Danger? Muſt the Sword, on that Account, *devour for ever?* Or, if it does ſo, is it leſs obvious that it will be *Bitterneſs in the latter End?*

HOWEVER, as Precedents are often hunted after, in ſuch Caſes, and reſted in as deciſive, let us have Recourſe to Precedent, and try what Inſtructions it will afford us: Nor will it be difficult to find one to our Purpoſe. The Caſe of Iſrael and Judah, with which we ſet out, is directly in Point.

THE Kingly Form of Government was introduced in Iſrael at the joint Solicitation of the twelve Tribes, and Saul clothed with Authority by the Direction of Heaven. Theſe Circumſtances gave him every poſſible Claim to Obedience; and while he diſcharged his Duty, every Attempt to divide or overthrow his Kingdom was altogether inexcuſable. Yet, we find that in the Reign of his Son, the Tribe of Judah, which may be conſidered as a Colony deſcended from the Loins of Iſrael, revolted, erected themſelves into an independent State, and anointed David to be their King.

THIS Erection was condemned as rebellious, at the Court of Iſhboſheth, and Abner marched out

out with the Armies of Iſrael in Order to ſuppreſs it. For this Purpoſe, he was clothed with full Power to make Peace, or carry on War, as Circumſtances might require. In this important Character he marched to Gibeon, fluſhed with the Hopes of an eaſy Conqueſt, and a complete Subjection of the revolted Tribe. As the Kingdom of David was not fully eſtabliſhed, he imagined that the Appearance of an Army in the Territories of Judah, would awe him into Submiſſion, and reduce his Adherents to their wonted Obedience. However, he ſoon diſcovered his Error. He found them prepared to meet him in the Field, and determined to oppoſe him with Firmneſs. And, in the firſt Engagement, his Army was routed, put to Flight, and narrowly eſcaped total Deſtruction.

When the firſt Diſcontents appeared in America, the ſame miſtaken Politicks prevailed in our Councils. Meaſures of Force were immediately adopted, and Troops diſpatched from Britain under the ſame Preſumption which led Iſrael aſtray. It was confidently aſſerted that a few Regiments would, not only, awe the diſaffected into Submiſſion, but march, without Interruption, from one End of the Continent to the other. As the Error was in common with Iſrael the Event was ſo too. After many Difficulties, Fatigues, and Encounters in which thouſands were ſlain, the ſhattered Remains of a powerful Army were obliged to abandon the Province which they were ſent to reduce, and flee for Shelter to a diſtant Region.

THUS far the Parallel holds exactly between Iſrael and Britain. The End to be accompliſhed, the Means adopted for that Purpoſe and the Succeſs which attended them are perfectly ſimilar. But, from this forward, the Meaſures which we have followed are totally different from thoſe of Abner. When he felt the Force of the Arms of Judah, and perceived the Expence of Blood at which they were to be reduced, he renounced his Meaſures of Coercion, and held forth the Branch of Peace. Tho' he fought in Support of a Family, in whoſe Favor the divine Right of Kings might have been pleaded with greater Propriety than any other which ever ſwayed a Sceptre—Tho' he came to reduce a revolted Tribe to Subjection, and re-eſtabliſh an Authority which had long been acknowleged; yet, when he perceived the Inexpediency of the Means propoſed for effecting theſe Purpoſes, he immediately rejected them. He neither pleaded the Supremacy of his Prince, nor the Omnipotence of the general Council of the Nation in Support of his favorite Meaſures. —He did not conſider the Honor of Iſrael as injured by receding from his original Demands; nor was he afraid of ſtrengthening the Hands of Rebellion in Judah, by offering Terms of Peace. As he perceived that the public Intereſt would be more effectually ſerved by a friendly Accommodation than the Ravages of the deſolating Sword, he choſe to acquieſce in the Determination of the revolted Tribe, and ſuffer them to enjoy their new-born Independence, rather than puſh his Claims of unlimited Submiſſion, and thereby

thereby protract a War, the End of which, he foreſaw, muſt have been Bitterneſs.

HAD the firſt Repulſes of our Troops been thus attended to, and the Conſequences, to which they pointed, duly weighed, Counſels of Peace would have prevailed with us alſo; and, even now, we would have been rejoicing in their Influence. However, different Meaſures were preferred and the Effects are notorious to all. "After being in journeyings often, in Perils of "Waters, in Perils by their own Countrymen, "in Perils by the Heathen, in Perils in Cities, "in Perils in the Wilderneſs, in Perils on the "Sea, in Perils among falſe Brethren; in Wea-"rineſs and Painfulneſs, in Watchings often, "in Hunger and Thirſt, in Cold and Naked-"neſs," our Troops, which, ſo lately, ſpread the Terror of the Britiſh Arms over half the Globe, are partly ſurrounded by the power of the Enemy, partly confined in Dungeons, and partly numbered with the Dead: While the Army, which was to lay America at the Feet of the Miniſtry, is, at this Day, returning to Europe in Chains. *

FROM all theſe Things taken together it appears, that in whatever Point of View we conſider the preſent civil War we have Cauſe to

* When this Diſcourſe was delivered there was not the leaſt Reaſon to ſuſpect that the unfortunate Remains of General Burgoyne's Army would be detained in America. It was generally believed they were then embarked, and on their Paſſage to Europe.

reprobate it. If we conſider it as trampling Humanity under foot, and violating the Ties of Blood, it is unnatural, and barbarous: And, if we conſider it, as diſſolving the Bonds of Proteſtantiſm, wounding the Intereſts of Britain thro' the Sides of America, or expoſing us to the Inroads of a jealous Enemy, it is fooliſh, impolitic and wicked. Can we, therefore, heſitate what were beſt and ſafeſt to be done? Is not the Way of Peace, in all Reſpects, to be preferred? And, while Faction roars for Blood, * and upſtart Loyalty beats to Arms, doth not every real Friend to his Country look forward with earneſt Deſire to the happy Day when *the Sword ſhall ceaſe to devour?* Is it not the firſt Prayer of his Heart that the Wiſdom of Britain may yet ſtretch forth the peaceful Olive to the weſtern World; and the ſecond that She may not ſtretch it forth in vain?

YET, ſuch is the Rage of Ambition, that even this Meaſure, for which Humanity, Religion, Policy, and Precedent jointly plead, is loudly declaimed againſt as humiliating and diſhonorable; and many Circumſtances of Guilt are alleged againſt the Coloniſts to juſtify the Continuance of War, in order to reduce them. "Prerogative has been infringed, Allegiance "withdrawn, the Omnipotence of Parliament "inſulted, and an independent State erected in

* See the ſanguinary Addreſſes to the Throne from all Parts of Scotland, in which all Ranks and Denominations ſeem to vie with each other in blood-thirſty Expreſſions of Loyalty, the Clergy not excepted.

"Con-

"Contempt of it's Authority." Now, let all this be granted, without raking up Provocations, Injuries, or any Thing which may tend to irritate, and what will be the Conſequence? Tho' theſe Offences are great, are we to ſacrifice our All to a Point of Honor? Or, to uſe a favorite Mode of Expreſſion, does Authority requre that a Parent ſhould riſque his own Perdition in an Attempt to chaſtiſe the Ingratitude of a Child, when Experience ſhews that he is unequal to the Taſk? Surely no. Such Pleas for War, are lighter than Duſt in the Balance, when oppoſed to the weighty Conſiderations which call for Peace.

WHILE Peace is, thus, the Object of our Deſire, we muſt receive a peculiar Satisfaction from a Review of the Conduct of Iriſh Preſbyterians, on this trying Occaſion. Our Enemies, if any ſuch we have, can ſcarcely deny, that as a Body, we have been guided by the Spirit of Moderation. We have neither attempted to clog the Wheels of Government by frantic Oppoſition; nor to encourage Meaſures of Violence by ſanguinary Addreſſes. If we have, in any Inſtance, cenſured the Principle or Conduct of the War, our Cenſures have been juſtified by the general Feelings of Humanity, and a zealous Concern for the common Intereſts of Britain and America. And ſhould Neceſſity call us forth, to oppoſe the jealous Enemies of our Liberties and Religion, we are ready to approve ourſelves the ſteady Friends of the Conſtitution, and the Rights of our Country.

As we have, thus, cheriſhed a Love of Peace, and followed it's Path in Time paſt, let us perſevere in it, in Time to come. And, while we, this Day, bow ourſelves, before the moſt High, to pray for the Pardon of our political Offences, the Suppreſſion of Anarchy, Rebellion and arbitrary Power; and the Reſtoration of Order, Liberty and Peace, thro' the American Colonies; let us pray alſo, that He, *by whom Kings rule, and Princes decree Juſtice*, would direct the Heart of our King, teach our Senators Wiſdom, and incline thoſe, who preſide in public Affairs, to embrace ſuch Meaſures as may tend to introduce Events ſo deſirable, and happy.

BLESSED,—thrice bleſſed be the Man, in whoſe Breaſt the healing Counſel may originate: May he ſee his Meaſures prevail, and Faction, Hoſtility, and national Diſcontent laid low at his Feet; may he ſee Britain and America reunited in the Bonds of Peace, and Love, and mutual Confidence. May he ſee a numerous and happy Poſterity rejoicing in the Fruits of his Counſels; and feel the Bleſſings of a grateful People, whom he hath ſaved from Deſtruction, ſhowered down upon him; And, when he ſhall have ſerved the Purpoſes of Providence, in the Salvation of his Country, may he reſign his Body to the Grave, in an honorable old Age, while his Soul, amidſt the Acclamations of guardian Angels, mounts the Skies in Triumph, where *the Peace of God, which paſſeth all Underſtanding*, ſhall be his Portion for ever!

AMEN.

SERMON III.

ON THE

COMING OF THE SON OF MAN,

PREACHED BEFORE THE PARTICULAR SYNOD OF BELFAST, AT THEIR ANNUAL MEETING, NOVEMBER FOURTH, 1777, AND PRINTED AT THEIR REQUEST.

SERMON III.

LUKE XII. 40.

Be ye, therefore, ready alſo; for the Son of Man cometh, at an Hour, when ye think not.

THO' every Part of the Diſcourſes of Jeſus is well calculated to inform the Mind of Man, and lead him to the Purſuit of his chief Good; yet his Parables are moſt eminently ſubſervient to theſe Purpoſes. They are founded on the moſt exact Knowledge of human Affairs; and eaſily apply themſelves to the Weakneſſes, Follies, and Vices of the World.

ONE great Object, to which many of them refer, is that ſtupid Attachment to the periſhable Things of this Life, which diverts the Attention from more valuable Objects, and ſhuts out every Thought of Things more excellent.

The Folly and Danger of this Attachment can not be painted in more ſtriking Colours, than in the Parable of the rich Man, as it is recorded in the preceding Verſes. His whole Attention was engroſſed by his growing Wealth; and his every Thought employed in deviſing Means of preſerving it. And, as every Thing around conſpired to increaſe his Stores, he indulged in a ſtupid Security; never reflecting on the Uncertainty of human Affairs; or of that Life, on which the Poſſeſſion and Enjoyment of them depend. But while he vainly exulted in his Wealth, and flattered himſelf with the deluſive Proſpect of many Years Fruition, ſaying to his Soul; "Thou haſt much Goods laid up, for "many Years; take thine Eaſe, eat, drink, and "be merry;" What muſt have been his Feelings, on hearing the fatal Sound; "Thou "Fool! this Night thy Soul ſhall be required "of thee!"

THE Man muſt be blind, indeed, who does not immediately perceive the Fooliſhneſs of his Attachment, and the fatal Diſappointment of which it was the Source, as Death muſt ſeparate him, for ever, from the Darling of his Heart.

THE Perception of theſe, however, is not ſufficient; nor are we to reſt ſatisfied with it. Leſſons muſt be deduced from them, for the Direction of our own Purſuits. And that we might not err in the Deduction, the Redeemer hath pointed out the Inſtructions for us, and ſubjoined every Conſideration which can give them

them Weight. He hath taught us, not only, that the Things of this Life are uncertain Sources of Enjoyment; but that they are our Maſter's Goods, with which we, as Servants, are entruſted for a Seaſon.—That he will certainly demand an Account of them—That the Time of this Demand is to us uncertain—And that he will reward thoſe who have been faithful, by a more glorious and extenſive Truſt; and, as a diſtinguiſhing Mark of his Favor, will ſet them down at his Table, and gird himſelf, as a Servant, to attend them.

WHEN we calmly weigh theſe Conſiderations in our Minds, and attend to their Importance, we perceive, at firſt View, that no Leſſon can come to us more powerfully recommended than the Moral couched under this Parable, and ſubjoined by our Lord: "Be ye, "therefore, ready alſo: for the Son of Man cometh at an Hour when ye think not."

IN treating this Subject, we may inquire, 1ſt. WHAT is to be underſtood by "the "Coming of the Son of Man."

2dly. WHEREIN the Readineſs for his Coming conſiſts. And,

3dly. POINT out the Propriety and Importance of the Reaſon aſſigned, why we ſhould be ready: "For the Son of Man cometh, at an "Hour, when ye think not."

"THE Coming of the Son Man," as mentioned in Scripture, refers to, and points out, Times and Events widely different. However, each

each of theſe is, in itſelf important, and intereſting to Men. Sometimes it is uſed to expreſs the Appearance of Meſſiah, as a Teacher ſent from God: an Event which had become an Object of general Expectation throughout the Nations. Sometimes it refers to the Deſtruction of the Jewiſh Temple and Polity. And ſometimes to that awful ſolemn Hour, in which he ſhall deſcend from Heaven to call the Nations of the Earth to Judgment.

THE firſt of theſe Events was accompliſhed, at the Time in which this Declaration was made; tho' the Jewiſh People were ſo blinded, by Prejudice, that they could not perceive the Evidences of it. The Coming of the Son of Man, which is here announced, muſt, therefore, have the Deſolation of Jeruſalem, or the General Judgment, as it's Object.

THAT the Deſolation of Jeruſalem was the Object, which Jeſus had immediately in View, is hardly to be doubted. To this he frequently looked forward with painful Concern; and urged it's Approach, as a Motive to Repentance, to the Jewiſh People. And, in general, he pointed it out, under the Idea of his Coming. This is certainly the Meaning of the Phraſe, in his Addreſs to the Multitude, when he declared that there were ſome, among them, "who ſhould "not taſte of Death until they ſaw the Son of "Man coming in the Clouds of Heaven." And in his Reproof to Peter, for his impertinent Curioſity concerning John: "If I will "that he tarry till I come, what is that to "thee?"

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THIS was, undoubtedly, an Event of great Importance to that deluded People; and the Accompliſhment of it may be conſidered, in a figurative Senſe, as, "the Coming of the Son "of Man," as it was effected according to his Denunciation, and by the Inſtruments of his Vengeance.

HOWEVER, "the Coming of the Son of "Man," often refers to an Event vaſtly more important, not only to the Jews, but to the whole reaſonable Creation of God. An Event, at the Accompliſhment of which, his Appearance will be perſonal, ſplendid, and awful. He ſhall come in the Glories of Immortality, clothed with Dominion, and attended by the numerous Hoſts of Heaven. And as the Time of his Appearance ſhall decide the eternal Fate of every accountable Spirit who ſhall have inhabited this lower World, it may juſtly be called "the Hour of his Coming," in Preference to every former Interpoſition.

THE Time, in which the Redeemer ſhall thus come, is to us totally unknown. Revelation hath not, as yet, pointed it out; nor can it be aſcertained by any Reaſoning whatever. Yet the Neceſſity of our preparing for it is not, in the leaſt, affected by this Uncertainty. Whether this Event be forty, or four Thouſand Years diſtant is of little Importance to us, ſo long as we know that Death puts an End to our State of Diſcipline; and that there is "no "Knowlege, nor Wiſdom, nor Device in the "Grave," to which we all haſten.

THIS Connection between Death and "the "Coming of the Son of Man," leads us to conſider them as Events equally ſolemn; And, as Death muſt ſiſt us before his Judgment-ſeat, our Preparation for them muſt be the ſame. We may, therefore, inquire wherein that Readineſs for the Coming of the Son of Man conſiſts, which is here recommended.

DID Death deſtroy Senſibility and Thought; or put a final Period to Exiſtence, we would be at no Loſs to determine this Matter. The Language of the rich Man, in the Parable, might then be ſafely adopted; "Take thine "Eaſe, eat, drink, and be merry." Let the preſent Life be filled with every Gratification which Appetite can crave, or the World afford —All beyond is one eternal Blank.

THIS, however, is not the Caſe. Our Souls ſecure in their Exiſtence, o'erlook the Grave, and ſmile at all it's ſable Terrors. They point forward to another State, to which Death is only the Entrance; and Revelation gives Sanction to it's Reality. Nor are we left to imagine that Thought will there be confined, Senſibility loſt, or Reflection ſilenced. On the contrary, the one will be extended, and the others enlivened beyond our preſent Conceptions. The beſt Preparation for Death muſt, therefore, conſiſt in rendering Thought, Senſibility, and Reflection Sources of Enjoyment.

THIS might be eaſily effected if no Objects ſollicited our Attention, but ſuch as could afford

endleſs Gratifications; and were all our Propenſities compatible with that State to which Death will introduce us. But, the Reverſe is our Situation. We are ſurrounded by a Variety of Objects, neceſſary for our preſent Subſiſtence or Comfort, ſome of which are periſhable, and all incapable of being tranſported beyond the Grave; Nor will the Affections, which center in them, find any Thing correſpondent in the future World. While theſe Affections, therefore, predominate, we can never be ready for the Coming of the Son of Man. This is equally true, whether they have Riches, Honors, or ſenſual Gratifications as their Object. As theſe are confined to the preſent World, the Man who hath ſought no other Good, muſt be poor, indeed, when Death's deſtroying Hand ſhall ſweep him off, leaving them all behind; and dreary muſt be his Proſpects when the World of Spirits ſhall be diſcloſed to View.

The firſt Step then, which Wiſdom dictates in a due Preparation for this intereſting Event, is to form right Judgments of the periſhable Things of this Life, and to reſtrain every undue Degree of Attachment to them. This will enable us, at leaſt, to paſs hence without Reluctance; and enter upon another World without regretting our Removal from the preſent.

To recommend this Part of our Preparation, the Scriptures juſtly repreſent us, "as Strangers and Sojourners upon Earth—As having "no continuing City here, nor any Place of fixed

"fixed Abode;" but paſſing on to another Country, where our Reſidence ſhall be everlaſting. Now, what Idea would we form of a Man who would ſet out for ſome diſtant Country, in full Aſſurance of an extenſive Inheritance, in Poſſeſſion of which his Days would paſs in Feſtivity, and his Nights in calm Repoſe; and where the Evils of Life would be excluded from his Habitation, for ever—Who, nevertheleſs, forgetful of his Intereſts, would devote himſelf to every trifling Object which ſollicited his Attention; ſport away his Time in vain Amuſement; or attach himſelf ſo cloſely to the firſt Inn at which he called for Refreſhment, as to leave it with Reluctance, or, perhaps, entirely forget the great Object originally in View? Without Heſitation we would pronounce him ſtupid, even to Inſenſibility, or fooliſh beyond Excuſe. Yet, we are chargeable with the ſame Impropriety of Conduct, if we cheriſh ſuch a Fondneſs for this our firſt Stage in the Path to Immortality, as to forget the End of our Hope; or ſo encumber ourſelves, with Things periſhable, as to be unable to proceed.

THIS, however, is not the only Preparation for the Coming of the Son of Man. We muſt not only be ready to reſign our Connections with the preſent World; but acquainted with, and ready to enter into the Entertainments of that to which we paſs. According to the Apoſtle's Similie, The Man who forgets the End of his Journey—waſtes his Time in vain Amuſements—or fixes his Heart on improper Objects,

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is not more blameworthy, than he who raſhly engages in it, and proceeds with Precipitation. Safety and Advantage jointly require that Difficulties ſhould be weighed, and Dangers guarded againſt. Climate and Inhabitants muſt be carefully ſtudied; and ſuitable Proviſion made for an Introduction to the one, and a Conformity with the Manners of the other. And if ſocial Intercourſe be expected in Perfection, a Similarity in Sentiment and Temper muſt be carefully cheriſhed. The Traveller, therefore, who does not attend to, and provide for theſe, muſt be grievouſly diſappointed in the End, if he has any Expectation of Happineſs. He muſt be eſtranged, for ever, from the Enjoyments of thoſe, among whom he reſides, and in continual Danger of falling a Victim to his own Ignorance, or Inſenſibility.

THIS Circumſtance applies, with particular Propriety, to us, who, after a ſhort Journey through this World, "paſs hence and appear "no more," on this Side the Grave. The Country, to which we travel, is boundleſs in Extent. Its Inhabitants conſtitute one innumerable Family under the continual Inſpection of the Father of all. Their Inheritance is glorious, and their Joys are full. If we, then, are Candidates for a Portion in their Inheritance, can any Thing be more proper, to prepare us for the Enjoyment, than a Knowlege of their State, of the Glory of the Objects which they contemplate, the Characters which they bear, and the Sentiments from which their Enjoyments flow? Or any Thing more neceſſary than that we

we ſhould poſſeſs the ſame Diſpoſitions and Temper which they conſtantly cheriſh? Nothing certainly. As their Happineſs ariſes from a Contemplation of the moſt glorious Works of God, and the Sentiments of Devotion, Love, and Joy which they inſpire—As their Employment is to "fly upon the Errands of the Al-"mighty," and execute the Purpoſes of his Will, by "miniſtring to thoſe who ſhall be "Heirs of eternal Life"—And as every Soul breathes pure Benevolence, and generous Love to all around; we muſt learn to imitate them in theſe Things, before we can poſſibly ſhare in their Joys.

THIS leads us to the general Idea of that Readineſs for the Coming of the Son of Man, which is recommended in the Text. It conſiſts in moderating our Affections to, and Purſuits of, the Things of this Life, by their reſpective Importance, and Capacity of contributing to our rational Entertainment; and the Cultivation of ſuch Knowlege, Diſpoſitions, and Habits, as qualify for the Enjoyment of the World to come.

IT now remains for us to conſider the Import and Strength of the Reaſon aſſigned, why we ſhould be ready for this intereſting Event: viz. "For the Son of Man cometh, at an Hour, "when ye think not."

THIS Reaſon plainly enforces Something more than the Neceſſity and Importance of cheriſhing Sentiments and Habits of Virtue, from

from the Apprehenſion that the Son of Man ſhall certainly come to judge the World. As this Event ſhall finally determine the State of reaſonable Beings, every Argument deduced from it, in Favor of Virtue, holds equally, whether we conſider it as far off, or "even at the "very Door." When it's near Approach, therefore, or the Uncertainty of the Time in which it ſhall be accompliſhed, is inſiſted on, the End is, not only to teach us that we ought to prepare for it; but that our Preparation ſhould begin with the preſent Moment, as, for aught we know, the next may ſift us before the Judgment-ſeat of Chriſt.

THERE is no Conſideration, which either Religion or Experience ſuggeſts to the Mind of Man, which pleads more powerfully for our immediate Repentance, and Improvement in Religion; or which may be urged, on every Occaſion, with greater Propriety. It is true; the very Certainty of Death, as an approaching Event, which uſhers us into an eternal World, affords Matter of ſerious and ſolemn Thought. As it puts an End to a State of Diſcipline, and opens a Scene of impartial deciſive Retribution, the Proſpect of it is truly awful, rouſes every Principle of Action, and ſtrongly incites to a Preparation for it.

YET, ſtill, ſome Plea might be deviſed for deferring it to ſome longer Day, were a mere negative Goodneſs ſufficient Preparation for the Coming of the Lord; or did we poſſeſs a Power of prolonging Life to ſome diſtant Period. But, neither

neither of theſe is our Caſe. A bare abſtinence from Vice is not ſufficient to anſwer the Purpoſes of Heaven. "We muſt, not only, ceaſe "to do Evil, but learn to do well." And as growing Capacities of Knowlege and Virtue are implanted in us, we muſt attend to, and cheriſh them in their Progreſs, through Life. "Our "Loins muſt be conſtantly girt, and our Lights "burning, and we like unto Men who wait for "their Lord."

NOR can we, with any Degree of Certainty, flatter ourſelves, that the Opportunity of Improvement here, ſhall be of long Duration; and that, after a prolonged Life, we ſhall drop into the Earth, at laſt, as Fruit fully ripe. Few there are, to whom this Proſpect is realized, in Compariſon of the untold Multitudes who are daily ſwept away by Death, in the Infancy of Being, the Bloom of Youth, or Strength of Manhood. He hath no Reſpect of Perſons. His Darts fly promiſcuous, and his deadly Blows are dealt without Exception. Beauty's faireſt Flowers cannot, even, for a Moment, charm his Eye, or arreſt his deſtroying Hand; and the boaſted Strength of Manhood, or towering Hopes of Youth, are as eaſily levelled with the Duſt, as the hoary Head, already bowing to its kindred Earth, or feeble Knee tottering to the Grave. His Dominion is wide as the material World; and his Power exerciſed in Obedience to the great Lord of Nature, whoſe ſecret Purpoſes he daily fulfils.

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THIS is a Truth which depends on no long and intricate Reaſonings for its Support. Experience vouches for it, in Time paſt; and every opening Day teems with freſh Examples. Theſe are ſo frequent that any Being, leſs inſenſible than Man, would be rouſed by the Recollection of them to conſider the Danger of his own Situation. Yet we paſs on, in peaceful Security, as if we held Life by an inviolable Tenure; and he, whoſe Remains were Yeſterday committed to the Duſt, was the laſt of the human kind, againſt whom the Hand of Death ſhould be raiſed. Yet we know not but we ſhall be the next for whom the Gates of Corruption ſhall open. What he was Yeſterday, we may be To-morrow, and the Day following may lay us by his Side. A Thouſand Accidents hover round us, the leaſt of which may deprive us of Life, even whilſt we ſpeak of it's Uncertainty. A Blow, a Fall, a Grain of Sand—an any Thing—may arreſt the Tide of Life in it's Channels, and bring about a ſudden Diſſolution.—The Peſtilence, which rides upon the Wind, may overtake us—a ſlow Poiſon may have already vitiated the Springs of Life—Or, our Souls may be expired on the next Breath.

AMIDST this Variety of Accidents, which threaten Diſſolution to our mortal Frame, how ſtrange does it appear that Men indulge in Sin, bury themſelves in ſenſual Purſuits, or neglect to prepare for the Coming of the Son of Man. Yet, ſtrange as it may appear, the Fact is certain. Thoſe very Mortals, who cannot, without Preſumption, challenge the next Mo-

ment as their own, preſume on Day after Day, and Year after Year, in Purſuits of Vanity. But ſtill they flatter themſelves that to-morrow will be Time enough to begin their Preparation for this important Event. Yet when to-morrow comes, ſome new Object, which preſents itſelf, muſt be attained, or Deſire gratified, and then—their Preparation *ſhall* begin to-morrow. So it is to-morrow, and to-morrow, ſtill, till Life's ſhort Span is meaſured out.

THIS Infatuation is truly wonderful. But, ſurely, a ſingle Moment's Reflection would break through the groſs Deluſion, and rouſe us to a Senſe of our Situation. *Where is* this To-morrow, to which we truſt ſo much? The fooliſh rich Man found it beyond the Grave. The ſame is certain to many who baſk, to Day, in Fortune's Smile, exult in Beauty's Bloom, or Manhood's vigorous Strength; and the contrary is ſure to none of us. But, ſhould this to-morrow come, will it prove more favorable than the Days which have already paſſed? Will the Charms of ſenſual Objects be leſs alluring, or our Reſolution ſtronger? Will the ſtubborn Force of Habit be more eaſily conquered, or the Motives to encounter it more powerful? Neither of theſe can be reaſonably expected.

"To-morrow's falſer than the Day before;
"lyes more; and while it ſays we ſhall have
"fairer Opportunities, cuts off what we poſ-
"ſeſs'd." DRYDEN.

"To-morrow, to-morrow, and to-morrow,
"creep in a ſtealing Pace, from Day to Day,
"till

" till the laſt Minute of revolving Time; And
" all the Yeſterdays, which we eſteem'd ſo
" little, have lighted Fools to their eternal
" Homes." SHAKESP.

WHY, then, do we depend on ſuch Uncertainty, or delay our Preparation for another World, when Experience ſhews, ſo clearly, that Delays are dangerous—that they ſteal away Day after Day, and Year after Year, till all are gone, and leave the vaſt Concerns of an eternal State to the Mercies of a Moment—— a Moment too, the moſt unfit for the important Work, as it is not only filled with bodily Pain, but imbittered by Reflection, and diſtracted with Doubts, if not Deſpair.

BUT, when this fatal Moment arrives, what would the Man, who hath truſted his All to it, give for the precious Opportunies which he hath ſuffered to eſcape? When the Terrors of Death are ſet in Array againſt him, in what gloomy Colors does his paſt Conduct appear!—How helpleſs his preſent Situation! And all beyond is Horror and Diſmay! The very Thought is terrible!

LET us, then, for a Moment, ſuppoſe the Situation ours. Let us ſtand as on the Brink of Time, and direct our Eyes forward to the Judgment-ſeat of the Son of God. Let us conſider ourſelves as ſiſted before him, with all our Follies and our Faults about us; and the next Moment as determining our State for ever—And, then, let us ſay what we would give for a Re-

petition of the Opportunities, which we have long neglected, and, even now, enjoy.

But, alas! ſhould we be ſo fooliſh, as to defer the moſt important Work of Life to this alarming Criſis, the Event muſt be fatal. Ten Thouſand Worlds, if at our Nod, could not recall one Moment that hath fled, nor redeem an Opportunity which hath been neglected. All that will then remain, will be an everlaſting Repentance of our Folly, "when Sorrow and "Lamentation and bitter Weeping" can avail us nothing. To us the Coming of the Son of Man will be truly terrible; nor can the Terror of it be better expreſſed than in his own Words: "The Lord of that Servant will come in a Day "when he looketh not for him, and at an Hour "when he is not aware, and will cut him aſunder, and appoint him his Portion with the "Unbelievers. And that Servant, who knew "his Lord's Will, and prepared not, neither "did according to his Will, ſhall be beaten with "many Stripes."

WHATEVER Tendency this Argument has to rouſe Mankind, in general, to prepare for the Coming of the Son of Man; it muſt be admitted as applying with peculiar Force to thoſe who miniſter in the Word of God. The Duties of their ſacred Office are more generally important, and the Virtue of Men depends more on the careful Diſcharge of them, than thoſe of any other Station.

THE Majority of Mankind are ſo cloſely engaged

gaged in the Buſineſſes of Life, from their very Childhood, that they have little Time, or Opportunity for attaining Knowlege, or engaging in religious Inquiry. The Objects of Sense early engroſs their whole Attention, and 'ere they reach the Prime of Life, they loſe a Reliſh for every Thing more refined. Hence Ignorance, Prejudice, Superſtition and Sin, ſo generally prevail.

The Buſineſs, then, of the miniſterial Office is to remove theſe, by placing the Evidences of Religion in a clear conſiſtent Point of View—repreſenting it's Doctrines with Fairneſs and Simplicity—ſtating it's Precepts in all their Force—and enforcing their Obſervance by a lively and ſtriking Exhibition of the various Motives which Revelation Offers. The Importance of theſe Things to Mankind is abundantly evident. For, tho' the Multitude may be incapable of tracing them out, we ſeldom find them blind to Truth when fairly repreſented, or inſenſible to the Motives of Religion, when urged with becoming Warmth.

To us, then, my Reverend Fathers and Brethren, this important Taſk belongs. We have obliged ourſelves, in the ſtricteſt Manner, to the Performance, by our voluntary Aſſumption of the Character of Teachers; and thereby become as much the Ambaſſadors of Chriſt as if ſent from Heaven to proclaim the Counſels of God. While we, therefore, indulge in Ignorance of what we have obliged ourſelves to teach—While we conceal an Article of what

we know—miſrepreſent the Truth in any Inſtance—or expreſs it with ſtudied Ambiguity—While we ſuffer Vice to paſs unreproved, or neglect to encourage aſpiring Virtue, we fall ſhort of the Character which we are bound to ſupport; and cannot "be ready for the Coming "of the Son of Man," whoſe Servants we profeſs to be.

As we, therefore, hold Life by the ſame uncertain Tenure as other Men—As "the Son of "Man may come" to call us to Account, "at "an Hour when we think not," let us ſeriouſly inquire whether we are really prepared for his Appearance.

HAVE we, as Shepherds of the Flock of Chriſt, fed it with Diligence, and watched over it with tender Care? Or, inſtead of green Paſtures, and pleaſant healthful Springs, have we led it through Wilderneſſes which are barren; offered it muddy or bitter Waters to quench it's Thirſt; or ſuffered it to become the Prey of devouring Wolves?

THE Inquiry is important: and, though we neglect to make it now, the Period faſt approaches when it muſt be made.—When the chief Shepherd ſhall appear we muſt attend his Judgment-ſeat; and every Soul committed to our Care ſhall ſtand before him to witneſs for, or againſt us. If we ſhall be found approved at that ſolemn Hour as preſenting before the Redeemer's Throne the Souls for whom we have watched, holy, pure, and ſpotleſs—and can declare

clare with Truth, that "of thoſe which he hath "given us we have loſt none," how glorious ſhall be our Reward—What the Congratulations of thoſe happy Spirits to whom we have miniſtred! What the joyous Acclamations of Angels —the Approbation of the Redeemer—and the exalted Rank to which we ſhall then be raiſed! "Well done good and faithful Servants enter "ye into the Joys of your Lord. Ye have "been faithful over a few Things; therefore, "ſhall ye now be Lords over many."

But if, on the other Hand, it ſhall then appear that, thro' our Neglect or Diſhoneſty, a precious Soul hath periſhed, or even fallen ſhort of that Degree of Glory, to which it might have aſpired, how bitter muſt be our Reflections!—how dreadful our Proſpects! With what Feelings ſhall we behold the wretched Spirit paſs along to join the miſerable Throng who ſtand on his left Hand! How ſhall we bear it's juſt Revilings, and Imprecations dire—the condemning Frown of Heaven's Hoſts—and the Redeemer's ſtill more dreadful Voice! "Take the un- "profitable Servant, bind him Hand and Foot, "and caſt him into outer Darkneſs."

When we conſider theſe Things, and the uncertain Tenure by which thoſe, we teach, hold Life, a Regard to them ſhould rouſe us to exert our every Power in their Behalf——But when to this we add the ſerious Reflection that we ſtand upon the ſame uncertain Ground, and that all the Avenues of Death lie open to us as well as them, a Regard to ourſelves joins it's

Influence, and prompts us forward in the Path of Duty, that we, too, may be ready to meet the Son of Man at his Coming———

LET us then, be hence incited "to lay aſide "all Hypocriſy and Guile, to avoid vain and "fooliſh Queſtions, and Strifes of Words, and "let us feed the Flock of God which is among "us, keeping the Over-ſight thereof, not for "filthy Lucre's Sake, but of a ready Mind: "Neither as being Lords over God's Heritage, "but being Enſamples to the Flock. And when "the chief Shepherd ſhall appear, we ſhall re-"ceive a Crown of Glory which fadeth not a-"way."

SERMON IV.

ON THE HOPE OF MEETING, KNOWING, AND REJOICING WITH VIRTUOUS FRIENDS, IN A FUTURE WORLD.

SERMON IV.

1 THESS. IV. 13,

I would not have you ignorant Brethren, concerning them who are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others who have no Hope.
14. *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*

THE Sorrow which the Apostle meant to soothe, by this affectionate and animating Address, arose from the Loss of some particular Friends to the Christians at Thessalonica, or perhaps to the Cause of Christianity itself. Whether they were removed in the ordinary Course of Providence, or taken off by the Hand of Persecution, is of little Moment to the Argument before us. In either Case, the Loss to th

the Survivors was the ſame; and the Source of Sorrow, here mentioned, the ſame alſo. The Grief which preyed upon their Spirits, would bear a near Proportion to the Senſe which they entertained of the Excellence of Character which diſtinguiſhed the Deceaſed, or the Loſs which they ſuſtained in being deprived of them. Men ſeldom feel the Bitterneſs of Affliction from the Apprehenſion that a departed Friend, whoſe Path through Life hath been marked out by the Laws of Religion, is a Loſer by being removed to the World of Spirits. They rather conſider themſelves, their Country, or Mankind at large, as ſuffering a Loſs, which Time cannot repair, in being deprived of his Preſence, Friendſhip, or Virtues.

THIS Obſervation derives ſufficient Support from the common Expreſſions of a Mourner's Woe. He never regrets that his departed Friend is expoſed to Suffering; or, that his Evils lie beyond the Reach of mortal Aid. The Recollection of his Virtues teaches him that he is far removed from every Thing which can hurt, or deſtroy——that he hath left all theſe behind, and entered into the Enjoyment of immortal Bliſs. His Language is, *I* have loſt—*I* have loſt the beſt of Parents, the moſt affectionate Brother, the moſt dutiful Child, or tendereſt Friend with which a mortal Man was ever bleſt! Whither ſhall I now flee for Counſel or Protection! Where ſhall I find a Father, Friend, or Brother! Alas! He is gone for ever! I ſhall never ſee his like again!*

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THE only Comfort, adequate to ſuch Affliction, ariſes from the Preſumption that the Friend, whoſe Loſs we mourn, ſhall be reſtored to us in ſome future Period; and, that our Reunion ſhall exclude, for ever, the Fear of Death or Separation. Without this our Sorrow would be hopeleſs, indeed. Experience, however, teaches, that for this Reunion we muſt look to another World, and tread the ſame dreary Vale of Death, through which he hath paſſed.

WHEN we endeavour to fix our Thoughts on this intereſting Subject, and to collect the Evidences which ſupport our Hope of meeting and rejoicing, in the World of Spirits, with thoſe whom our Hearts hold dear in the preſent, we muſt acknowlege that the Obſcurity of the Subject will not allow us to determine, with abſolute Certainty, in many Particulars. A thouſand Circumſtances, relative to the approaching State, are yet veiled in thick Darkneſs, or, but faintly made known. Yet, when we conſider it with Attention, we find ſuch Rays of Light ſhed around it as enable us to contemplate its Glories with conſiderable Pleaſure.

IT is true; in the Circumſtance immediately before us, as in every Matter, where ſtrict Demonſtration is not to be attained, the Opinions of Men are different. Some allege that no perſonal Recollection among the Virtuous ſhall take Place; that all ſhall be embraced, with equal Fervor, by the ſame undiſtinguiſhing Affection; and that every earthly Connection ſhall be loſt for ever: while others maintain, that Attach-

Attachments founded in Virtue will be renewed beyond the Grave, and preſerved inviolable, through Eternity. This latter Opinion, I ſhall endeavour to illuſtrate and confirm, from the original Conſtitution of our Nature; the Situation in which we are placed; and the Spirit of that heavenly Religion with which we are favored.

THAT the Mind of Man hath a natural Propenſity to cheriſh the Belief that we ſhall be reſtored to the Knowlege and Enjoyment of our departed Friends, in a future World, is extremely obvious. The Influence of this Principle is not confined by Country, external Circumſtances, or religious Diſpenſations. It ſhews itſelf univerſally in theſe trying Circumſtances which lead the Soul beyond the preſent State of Things to look for Comfort. When the Chriſtian reſigns all Expectation of recovering a long-loſt Friend in the preſent World, he compoſes his Mind, by the pleaſing Hope of meeting him in Heaven. And, if we may truſt human Teſtimony, the Savages of Africa often put an End to their Lives, from a Belief that Death will reſtore them to their Friends, and Countrymen, from whom the Barbarity of Chriſtians hath forced them into Slavery. Thus, the Savage and the Sage equally acknowlege its Reality, and comfort themſelves with the cheering Hopes which it inſpires. Nay, it is almoſt the only Circumſtance, reſpecting the future World, which vulgar Superſtition and poetic Fancy have not veiled in Abſurdity, or the Pride of Philoſophy explained away. Whatever Deluſi-

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ons prevailed, from the earlieſt Ages, concerning the State of departed Spirits, they are univerſally repreſented as knowing each other, rejoicing in their former Connections, and repeating the arduous Enterprizes in which they were engaged on Earth. Antient Poetry which generally reſted on public Opinion, as its Foundation, abounds with Deſcriptions of this Kind. Nor doth Philoſophy diſdain the Aids which this Expectation lends to oppreſſed Virtue. One of the greateſt Men who ever did Honor to human Nature, is ſaid to have ſupported himſelf, under the Proſpect of Death, with the Belief that, when removed hence, he would meet, converſe, and rejoice with the Heroes and Philoſophers who had gone before him into the World of Spirits. Revelation, alſo, preſents us with a ſtriking Example to the ſame Purpoſe. When David was deprived of his firſtborn by the Wife of Uriah, he overcame his Grief by the Reflection that, tho' his Child could not be reſtored in this World, he would certainly meet him beyond the Grave. "He "is dead," ſaith he, "why ſhould I faſt? Can "I bring him back again? I ſhall go to him; "but he ſhall not return to me." This Uniformity of Opinion, and Sameneſs of Hope, certainly carry in them an high Degree of Evidence that we ſhall meet, know, and delight each other in a future World, if virtuous Friendſhip hath united our Hearts in the preſent. Were theſe confined to any Age, or Situation of Mankind no certain Concluſion could be deduced from them. Did the rude and uncivilized only acknowlege their Influence, they might

might be conſidered as the empty Dreams of vulgar Superſtition.—And could they be traced only among the Writings of the Poets, or the Reveries of Philoſophers, they might be reſolved into the Flights of an ungoverned Fancy. But, when all Ages and Nations—when the learned and the unlearned; the Greek and the Barbarian; the Chriſtian, Jew, and Heathen, all conſpire, in the ſame Belief and Expectations, we have every Reaſon to conclude, that they were implanted in the Mind of Man by the Hand of the Creator; and, of Conſequence, that we ſhall not be diſappointed of their Accompliſhment.

THIS Concluſion derives additional Support from the Situation in which we are placed, and the Relations in which we ſtand. God hath eſtabliſhed a neceſſary Dependence among the Sons of Men. Every Individual needs daily the Aſſiſtance of thoſe around him for his Protection and Comfort; and is fitted, in his Turn, to repay the Benefits he receives by Acts of Kindneſs. Nor is this Dependence confined to ſuch Circumſtances as affect a mere animal Life. It extends to the more important Concerns of Knowlege, Virtue, and moral Diſcipline; and all the tender and endearing Relations among Men are founded on it. The Weakneſs and Wants of a Body uſhered into Life claim Protection and Aſſiſtance; and, without them, muſt immediately return to Duſt. Theſe are ſupplied by a Parent's Care; and when the original Weakneſs of his Child ripens into Strength; when that Strength is applied to

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ſome uſeful Purpoſe in Life; and Peace and Plenty accompany his Efforts, the Parent is happy: He conſiders every Exertion as his own; and in the Succeſs which attends them, he is fully rewarded for his many Hours of Solicitude and anxious Toil.

In this Caſe, however, the State of Diſcipline is only ſhort. It generally terminates with Youth: Yet all the Pleaſures of the after Life are the Fruits of Inſtruction of which it is the Scene. *What* Youth is to Manhood, in the Concerns of this State, *that* is the preſent Life to a future Exiſtence. This is the Infancy of our Being, and ought to be applied to the Purpoſes of Diſcipline for a maturer Age. However, we are as much dependent on others for this Diſcipline, as for the Food which ſupports our infant Bodies, or the Clothes which ſhelter us. We come into the World with Capacities and Inclinations only. Theſe muſt be cultivated by the Skill of thoſe who have gone before us, and directed into their proper Channels by the Counſels of Wiſdom. And the Imperfection of our State renders mutual Inſtruction in Righteouſneſs, and Comfort in the Ways of the Lord, neceſſary for us to the End of Life. This Neceſſity gives Birth to the moſt endearing Relations and important Offices in human Affairs. It extends the Effects of our mutual Services to the vaſt Concerns of an eternal World; and obliges us to conſider the Man who hath formed us to Knowlege, and the Love of God, as more than Father, Friend, or Brother. Yet, a thouſand Circumſtances concur to exclude us from a

complete Knowlege of the Value of theſe Services; nor is it probable that we ſhall fully attain it, till the Enjoyment of their bleſſed Fruits ſhall bring home, at once, to the Underſtanding and Affections a Senſe of their Excellence. And, as this is reſerved for another World, can we ſuppoſe it poſſible that Heaven will diſſolve, for ever, our virtuous Connections and Dependencies, at the very Moment, when we ſhall become ſenſible of their Importance, and capable of rejoicing in them! That the Parent ſhall be loſt to the Child whom he hath carefully trained up to Glory, from the Moment which puts an End to his Cares and Anxieties, and Joy begins to beam upon his Soul; And the Child to the Parent to whom he owes his All! That the Shepherd, who hath faithfully fed, and watched over the Flock of Chriſt, ſhall be ſnatched from them, when his Cares are happily terminated, and they introduced to the Paradiſe of God! Or, that they ſhall be eternally eſtranged from the Hand which fed them, and the Voice which they knew, and rejoiced in, as leading them in the Paths of Righteouſneſs! Theſe Things appear ſo inconſiſtent with every Part of the divine Government, which comes under our Obſervation, and particularly, with the Happineſs of which Virtue is the Source, that we can hardly, even in Imagination, conceive them poſſible. If God hath permitted us to indulge in the Pleaſures which ariſe from the Conſciouſneſs of doing Good; and to rejoice with thoſe whom we have aſſiſted in the Purſuit of Happineſs; ſurely, he will not forbid us, even to know, in Heaven, the bleſſed Spirits, whom, in

in Obedience to his Will, we have encouraged in the Path to Glory. Or, if Gratitude be the Child of Heaven, and it's Exercise pleasing to the Highest, he can never be supposed to check the Expressions of it, by hiding those from our Knowlege, whom, next to the Redeemer of the World, we must ever love as our greatest Benefactors. And, if it be true, that the future World shall improve to the utmost, and ripen into full Maturity, those tender Plants of Virtue, which are, at best, but sickly in this barren Wilderness, and give a new Relish to the Pleasures of which they are productive, it is more evident still, that those who have encouraged each other in the Trials to which Religion is exposed, and trode her Paths in mutual Friendship here, shall know and be known in the approaching State.

THERE is another Point of View, in which we may be considered, from which the same Conclusion directly follows. Every created Being is imperfect, and limited in its Powers; and, however these Powers may be improved, they can never rise to Infinity, or absolute Perfection. The very Idea of a derived and dependent Existence pronounces this impossible. The most exalted Angels, who minister before the Throne of God, can comprehend but a small Part of his Works, or the Ways of his Providence. Infinity is too vast for their Conception, and the hidden Things of Eternity too dark for their finding out. As they, therefore, fly upon the Errands of the Almighty, and rejoice to execute his Will, they must have different Regi-

ons and Offices aſſigned them; and be formed into different Societies, according to the Rank which they hold, and the Services which they perform. In this View Revelation ſpeaks of them, and repreſents them as arranged under different "Governments, Principalities, and Powers." Nor is it to be doubted that, in paſſing from Place to Place, thro' Creation's vaſt Extent, they improve their Knowlege, enlarge their Connections, and encreaſe their Happineſs, while they miniſter to the Improvement and Happineſs of others.

When we, therefore, ſhall be admitted to a Portion of their Inheritance, is it not highly probable that the ſame Circumſtances ſhall attend us, and the ſame Appointments take Place, with Reſpect to us? And, as we muſt be lower than they, in Capacity and Power, our Sphere of Action, and our Connections muſt be narrower, according to our Rank. For, "if Angels yet ſeek to look into" the Myſteries of Heaven for Information, and are chargeable with Folly before God, what Preſumption in us to imagine that the firſt Moment, which uſhers us into Glory, will enable us to comprehend the Fulneſs of infinite Perfection—to take in, at one View, the Immenſity of God's Works—to unravel all the Intricacies in his Government—and riſe, at once, in Knowlege, Glory, and Refinement, above thoſe who have baſked in eternal Day from the Foundations of the World! Is it not more reaſonable to ſuppoſe that we ſhall paſs thro' the ſame Services which they have already perfected?—That we ſhall be claſſed

claſſed together, according to the Proficiency which we have made in our State of Diſcipline, and the Services of which we are capable? And, as thoſe who have dwelt together, enjoyed the ſame Privileges, and "fought the good Fight "of Faith" under the ſame Diſadvantages, may be naturally ſuppoſed to have the neareſt Reſemblance in Temper, Taſte, and Excellence of Character, we may conclude that they will be moſt nearly connected in the World of Spirits, and enjoy the Fruits of their Triumph in common.

AGAIN: As the Power of all created Beings is limited, ſo, in the heavenly Regions, this Power muſt be employed in promoting Happineſs. If it, therefore, can extend its Influence, only, to certain determinate Bounds, the Generoſity of Soul which prompts to Action muſt be proportioned to its Extent, and be limited, in ſome Meaſure, by the Power of doing Good.

THE Reality and Uſefulneſs of this Conſtitution we may be fully convinced of, every Day. Our Sympathy, with thoſe around us, is ſeldom proportioned to the Degree of their Happineſs or Miſery. It is varied by a thouſand other Circumſtances. While the ſlighteſt Affliction of a Friend or Acquaintance; or the moſt trivial Accident in a neighbouring Village involves us in deep Diſtreſs, we are ſcarcely moved with the Accounts of thouſands, at a Diſtance, who have been cut off by the Sword, of Countries waſted by Famine and Peſtilence, or Cities ſwallowed by Earthquakes. The ſame Circum-

Circumſtances regulate our Feelings in other Reſpects. We are ſenſibly touched with Pity for the Ignorance, Vice, or Superſtition of thoſe around us; and at the ſame Time, reflect with Indifference upon whole Nations, on whoſe Minds a ſingle Ray of divine Light hath never beamed. And, in Proportion to the Degree of our Sorrow, or our Pity, is our Pronenes to Beneficence, and Deſire of giving Relief. Now, the only Reaſon, which can be given for this Conſtitution, is, that thoſe around us may be benefited by the Exertions of our Power, while to thoſe at a Diſtance it is of no Avail. And, tho' this Reaſon may not hold, in it's full Force, in a future State, as Miſery can never enter the Manſions of the Bleſſed; yet, as innumerable Opportunies of mutual Services will undoubtedly preſent themſelves, thro' endleſs Ages, it certainly holds, ſo far as Happineſs may be increaſed, and our Power rendered acceſſary to it. And this very Circumſtance may lay the Foundation of the different Arrangements among the angelic Hoſts; and, alſo, of thoſe renewed Connections, among the Spirits of the Juſt, for which we argue.

As all theſe Conſiderations favour our Hopes of meeting and rejoicing together in a future World, we may now inquire how far Revelation tends to confirm them, either by it's expreſs Declarations, or the Spirit which it breathes. And, in this Inquiry, we will find the Prophets and Apoſtles treading the ſame Ground on which we have proceeded thus far, and on it founding the ſame Superſtructure. It muſt, however, be acknowleged

knowleged, that the Declarations of Scripture, on this Particular, are neither numerous nor explicit. The Reaſon is obvious. A Revelation made to Men muſt afford the moſt effectual Means of improving human Nature. While it, therefore, aſcertains the great Lines of Duty, and the Motives upon which it is enforced, it leaves many of the Particulars of both as Subjects of Inveſtigation, that in diſcuſſing them the reaſoning Powers may be exerciſed, our Capacities enlarged, and we, thereby, fitted for theſe more exalted Reſearches from which the heavenly Pleaſures ſhall ariſe. And while Revelation teaches what Virtue is, and aſſures us that in the World of Spirits, every virtuous Affection ſhall have a correſpondent Object, we can have no Cauſe to complain of Darkneſs, or Uncertainty. So long, then, as Gratitude to our Benefactors, and Love to thoſe whom we have trained up to Heaven, are Principles of Virtue, we may reſt aſſured that their Objects will be revealed to us, and we bleſſed with the Enjoyment of them.

REVELATION, however, makes Diſcoveries much more particular concerning the Inhabitants of the World to come. The Apoſtles plainly teach that thoſe who have laid down their Lives for the Intereſt of Religion, or, in any wiſe, diſtinguiſhed themſelves in its Cauſe, ſhall be eaſily known from the reſt of the Bleſſed. They repreſent them, as clothed with ſuperior Luſtre, and raiſed to higher Degrees of Honor; and ſpeak of an Introduction to the Aſſembly of the firſt-born, "whoſe Blood hath

"been

" been ſhed for the Teſtimony of Jeſus," as different from being joined to " the Spirits of " the Juſt made perfect." The ſame Sentiment is expreſſed by the Prophet Daniel. " They, " who are wiſe," ſaith he, " ſhall ſhine as the " Brightneſs of the Firmament, and they who " turn many to Righteouſneſs as the Stars, for " ever and ever." If we, then, by this Diſtinction, ſhall be brought to the Knowlege of thoſe who have been ſignally ſerviceable to the Intereſts of Religion, and turned many to its Purſuits, amidſt the untold Multitudes whom the Redeemer hath purchaſed with his Blood, we cannot ſuppoſe it improbable that we ſhall be enabled to diſtinguiſh thoſe, particularly, from whom we derived our religious Inſtruction, or to whom we have miniſtred in Things " which pertain to Life and Godlineſs."

WERE we to reſt ſatisfied, in this Matter, with ſome occaſional Expreſſions in Scripture, we would not only be confirmed in our Belief that the Righteous ſhall know each other in a future World; but led to extend this perſonal Knowlege, which Spirits ſhall poſſeſs, far beyond any thing which we have yet mentioned. Our Saviour repreſents it, as obtaining thro' the whole ſpiritual World; and introduces the rich Man, tho' wallowing in Torments, as knowing Lazarus afar off in Abraham's Boſom. If the Wicked, then, ſhall know the Righteous whom they have deſpiſed and abuſed, notwithſtanding the impaſſable Gulf by which they are ſeparated, we cannot doubt, but thoſe who have lived together in the Fear of God, and who rejoice in the

the Inheritance and Employment of Saints, ſhall mutually know, and be known for ever.

FURTHER, the very Spirit of Religion, and the firſt Principle into which all Revelation muſt be reſolved, add to this a Degree of Evidence nearly as great as the Matter will admit; and, if it is denied, we muſt unavoidably allow that God is either deſtitute of Goodneſs, or defective in Wiſdom. Wherever Goodneſs prevails, it muſt incline to communicate Happineſs; and, under the Direction of Wiſdom, the Means can never be miſtaken. Theſe Perfections we conſider as inſeparable in the divine Mind, and their Effects are daily ſeen and felt, thro' all the Works and Ways of God. Every Creature is placed in a Situation ſuited to it's Rank, ſupplied with whatever it's Neceſſities require, and directed by it's Inſtincts with unerring Certainty. Theſe Inſtincts are implanted by the Creator, and may be conſidered, as his immediate Direction in the Path to Happineſs: Nor do we ever ſee them fail of their End. We, however, are formed for a mixed Life; the Objects of our Purſuit are many, and widely different in their Nature; and, inſtead of Inſtinct, we muſt depend on Reaſoning for Guidance in the Path of Life. The Productions of the Earth are neceſſary to us, in common with the inferior Creatures; and, hence, of Neceſſity, we have Appetites in common with them, alſo. But, at the ſame Time, we have Affections, which lead to Objects and Purſuits of a nobler Kind, and Hopes, which point beyond the preſent State of Things, and raiſe us far a-

bove it. To regulate theſe Affections and Purſuits, according to the Worth and Duration of their Objects, is the moſt important Concern of human Life, and the great Buſineſs of all Religion. In this, however, we often fail. The Preſſure of preſent Calamities, on the one Hand, and the bewitching Allurements of Senſe, on the other, often miſlead our Judgment, attach us too firmly to the World, and withdraw our Attention from the more noble and valuable Purſuits which lead to Heaven. To correct this Evil, God hath interpoſed *at ſundry Times*, and in *divers Manners*; and, of his infinite Goodneſs, hath enjoined, by his Authority, what our Happineſs loudly called for. Every Purſuit, therefore, in which God hath reſtrained us, muſt be inconſiſtent with our chief Good; and every Object, to which he encourageth us to cheriſh an unlimited Affection, may be conſidered, as neceſſary to our Happineſs, and intended to be a never-failing Source of pure Delight. And, ſo long as the Conſtitution of our Nature is ſuch, that the Loſs of a beloved Object is a Source of Unhappineſs, we can never ſuppoſe that God would enjoin us, under Pain of his Diſpleaſure, to cheriſh an unbounded Love of any Thing, of which he intended, afterwards, to deprive us. As he, therefore, hath commanded us "to love our Neighbours as our-"ſelves—to love with pure Hearts fervently—"to love one another, even as Chriſt loved us"——And, if neceſſary, "to lay down our Lives "for the Brethren," it cannot be ſuppoſed that he will ſeparate us, for ever, when our Love is perfected, and our Souls united in the Bonds of inviolable

inviolable Affection. We may as well ſuppoſe that he will exclude, from his Kingdom, and Preſence, for ever, the pious Soul, who hath loved him with all his Heart, Strength, and Underſtanding: Or, that the devout Chriſtian, who loves the Redeemer, and rejoices in the Proſpect of his Appearance, ſhall neither *be made like him*, nor *ſee him as he is*, in the approaching State.

AGAIN; as the Wiſdom of God hath interpoſed to regulate our Affections, and direct our Steps, it hath enjoined us to reſtrain our Attachment to ſome Objects, whilſt we are commanded to cheriſh the moſt pure and fervent Love of others. Were no Reaſon aſſigned for theſe Things, we might be at a Loſs to determine the Principles on which they are founded; and, perhaps, obliged, at laſt, to receive them, with implicit Submiſſion, as the imperious Mandates of abſolute Authority. This, however, is not the Caſe. The periſhable Nature of thoſe Things, our Affections to which are reſtrained, and the conſequent Neceſſity of our Separation from them, are the Reaſons of the Reſtrictions themſelves. "It remains," ſaith the Apoſtle Paul, "that they who buy be as they who "poſſeſſed not; and they who uſe this World "as not abuſing it, for the Faſhion of this "World paſſeth away." And, ſaith John, "Love not the World, neither the Things "which are in the World; for all that is in the "World, the Luſt of the Fleſh, the Luſt of "the Eyes, and the Pride of Life, is not of the "Father, but is of the World; and the World

" paſſeth away, and the Luſt thereof; but he, " who doeth the Will of God, abideth for e- " ver." Now, if Religion reſtrains our Love to the World, becauſe, in it's Diſſolution, the Sources of our Happineſs ſhall be removed from us, and we left diſconſolate to mourn their Loſs, it follows that we are to love him " who doeth " the Will of God, becauſe he abideth for e- " ver," and, in Society with him we ſhall find eternal Delights.

THUS, we have ſeen, from the Conſtitution of our Nature, the Situation in which we are placed, and the concurrent Voice of Revelation, that we have every poſſible Reaſon to conclude that thoſe who tread the Paths of Virtue in Peace and Love while here ſhall meet, know, and delight each other in the World to come. Yet, ſtrong as theſe are, Difficulties oppoſe themſelves; but, they are ſuch Difficulties as oppoſe themſelves to every Concluſion which is not ſupported by Demonſtration, or Experience.

FROM the Accounts which Revelation gives of a Reſurrection State, it is alleged, that neither the Features which diſtinguiſh Individuals, nor the Senſes which perceive the Diſtinctions founded on them ſhall find Place in it——That they ſhall be totally changed; perhaps, done away: And, ſhould this be the Caſe, it is aſked, How is it poſſible that we can know, or be known, in ſuch a State? Inquiries of this Kind ſeldom proceed from a Deſire of Information. They are generally calculated to ſilence or perplex: and depend on miſ-ſtated Facts as their Foundation, and Preſumption, for their Support.

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This Obſervation is remarkably verified in the Caſe before us. Becauſe we muſt undergo Changes, the Nature of which we cannot determine, does it, therefore, follow that all perſonal Diſtinctions ſhall be loſt, or the Relations between our Organs of Perception and the other Parts of our Frame diſſolved for ever? It ſeems more reaſonable to ſuppoſe that, however great theſe Changes may be, or by whatever Means effected, they will extend equally to our whole Frame——That, in them, the Organs of Senſe will keep Pace with the other Parts; and, conſequently, in a State of Glory, will as readily diſtinguiſh glorified Bodies, as they do thoſe which are mortal and corruptible in the preſent.

FURTHER; allowing theſe Changes to be as great as they can be; our Organs of Senſe to periſh with the groſs and corruptible Parts of our Conſtitution; and us totally ignorant of any other Means of Perception, it would be great Preſumption in us to conclude that it is, therefore, impoſſible that we ſhould know, or be known, hereafter. Our Ignorance of the Means by which any Thing may be effected is no Argument againſt it's Accompliſhment; eſpecially when it's Weight is oppoſed to the joint Teſtimony of Nature and Revelation. To admit ſuch Evidence would deſtroy all Belief, even that of our own Exiſtence; as the Manner of it is as much unknown to us, as the Means by which we ſhall recogniſe each other in the heavenly Regions. Beſides, it is great Preſumption in us to determine the utmoſt Bounds of human Capacity. For ought we know many Powers

of Perception, inherent in our Spirits, and ſuited to the refined Objects in another World, may be diſcloſed in it: Nor is it improbable that the very Change, which Revelation calls *the Reſurrection of the Dead*, ſhall unfold them, and bring them into Action. There is no greater Difficulty in our conceiving that this ſhall be the Caſe, than for a Man born blind to admit the Poſſibility of perceiving the Figure, Size, or Motion of Bodies beyond the Reach of Touch; or diſtinguiſhing one from another without the Aſſiſtance of the Senſes to the Exerciſe of which he hath been accuſtomed. When he is firſt informed of the exiſtence of a Senſe by which Bodies may be perceived, and diſtinguiſhed from one another, at a greater Diſtance than he could travel in a thouſand Years, the ſame Difficulties occur to him, as to us in the Caſe before us. We know, however, that the Reality of ſuch a Senſe is not affected by his Incapacity of underſtanding it's Nature, or the Manner in which it conveys Information to the Mind. The Senſe of ſeeing exactly correſponds with this Deſcription. What Reaſon, then, have we to conclude that there may not be Powers of Perception unveiled in the future World vaſtly ſuperior to that of Sight? We may be ſure that Angels know each other; and, alſo, that their Powers and Modes of Perception differ widely from ours. As we, therefore, ſhall be made like unto Angels, is it not probable that we may poſſeſs ſimilar Powers, and derive ſimilar Advantages from the Exerciſe of them.

THUS far we have proceeded upon the Supposition that perſonal Knowlege is to be acquired

ed, or renewed, by obſerving external Appearances only. This, however, is far from being the Caſe. We have many Inſtances, of Perſons, who, after paſſing the earlier Part of Life together, have been ſeparated ſo long that the Recollection of every Feature was loſt; yet, in an accidental Interview, the Repetition of ſome Event which both knew, or were concerned in; or, the Mention of ſome buſy Scene, in which they had been engaged, hath reſtored them to mutual Knowledge, Friendſhip, and Delight. And, perhaps, that Proneneſs which we feel to recount our own Adventures, and Curioſity which intereſts us in thoſe of others, were given us by the Creator to aſſiſt us in recovering friendly Connections, and the Pleaſures to which they give Birth. Should the ſame Principles, then, attend us to another World, the exerciſe of them would certainly produce Effects nearly ſimilar. The Recapulation of the Struggles which we ſupported in the Cauſe of Religion, the Difficulties which we encountered, and the merciful Interpoſitions of Providence, which enabled us to triumph over them, would, at once, make us known to thoſe who trode the ſame Paths, encountered the ſame Difficulties, and experienced the Kindneſs of Heaven in common with us. The Recital of what occurred in our Endeavours to promote Truth and Virtue among Mankind, would diſcover us to thoſe in whom we had ſown the Seeds of Knowlege; and the Mention of thoſe, by whom we were trained in the Ways of God would immediately reſtore us to their Recollection and Embrace.

THIS will be, ſtill, more effectually accompliſhed, if, as Religion teacheth, the heavenly Inhabitants ſhall be employed in contemplating the Beauty, Grandeur, and Harmony of the Works of God, and tracing the Ways of his Providence. The firſt Step, towards our Comprehenſion of the divine Adminiſtration, at large, will be a clear and perfect Knowlege of thoſe Diſpenſations which immediately concern this little World: And the Review of them will afford ſuch Variety of Incidents, tending to a general Recognition, that it can hardly fail of being accompliſhed. Nay, they may, probably, introduce to each other the great and good of every Age and Country, who have ſignalized themſelves by an inviolable Zeal for the Honor of God, or the Intereſts of Mankind.

LASTLY; THE endearing Relation which ſhall ſubſiſt, for ever, between the Redeemer and his faithful Followers, muſt certainly ſerve ſome valuable Purpoſe to them. It is generally ſpoken of as eminently conducive to their Happineſs; and the divine John declares that, in the heavenly State, "he will feed them with his "Hand, and lead them to Fountains of living "Waters." The Meaning of theſe Expreſſions, certainly, is, that he will ſupply their Capacities of Happineſs with Means of Enjoyment, and introduce them to it's pure and inexhauſtable Sources. If the Preſence of a beloved Object, then, be a Source of Pleaſure; and, if the fervent Love of a virtuous Character be Virtue itſelf, we cannot doubt, but in leading the Inhabitants of the new Jeruſalem to *Fountains of living*

ing

ing Waters, Jeſus will lead them to the renewed Knowlege and Enjoyment of one another.

THESE Obſervations plainly ſhew that the Difficulties which lie in our Way to the Concluſion which we have been endeavouring to eſtabliſh, are not ſo formidable as they may, at firſt Sight, appear. It would, indeed, be Preſumption in us to aſſert that the Means, which we have mentioned, and no other, ſhall be uſed to revive our former Connections, and reſtore us to the Knowlege and Enjoyment of thoſe whom our Hearts hold dear. Yet, ſtill, it is evident that, ſhould no other be admitted, theſe are ſufficient to ſerve every Purpoſe for which we plead.

HAVING, therefore, removed this Difficulty, let us look forward, to another World, in the Strength of this Concluſion, and feaſt our Imaginations with the rich Proſpects which it opens before us. It contains ſomething more flattering to the Heart of Man than all the Grandeur and Magnificence of Heaven itſelf. It carries with it, from the preſent World, every Source of Entertainment, in which pure Intelligence can delight; and adds a ſoft and milder Luſtre to theſe eternal Splendors which iſſue from the Throne of God, and in the Reflection of which ſurrounding Spirits appear all-glorious. It blends the towering Flights of heavenly Contemplation, and Devotion's fervent Flame, with the tender Feelings of approved Friendſhip. While the Soul, wrapt in Aſtoniſhment, and pleaſing Extaſy, ſurveys the vaſt Extent, unfading Glories, and beauteous Order of the heavenly Manſions,

and

and the Joys of their Inhabitants; and raiſes his Thoughts from them to the God of all—— While he looks around the happy Multitude, whom the ſame Contemplations delight, and, who expreſs their Pleaſure in Songs of Praiſe, what amazing Tranſports muſt he derive, amidſt the general Joy, from the well-known Voice of a Parent, Friend, or darling Child, whom Heaven, in Mercy, had removed, long before, from the Vanities of a mortal State! And, even to this, a Reflection upon the Weakneſſes, Wants, and Troubles of the preſent Life muſt give additional Raptures. If the Soldier, worn out with Labour and Fatigue, rejoices to meet the Companion of his Youth, in ſome peaceful Retreat, and to talk over their common Dangers, their Feats, or their Victories; what muſt be the Delight of the Saint, who meets the Companion of his mortal Toils, Temptations, and hardy Struggles in the Cauſe of Virtue, in a State, where Temptations ſhall no more aſſail, Infirmity depreſs, nor Enemies annoy them! If the Parent, who hath formed a beloved Child to Knowlege, and the Arts of Life, meets him with Rapture, after a long Separation, and exults in the Succeſs which hath crowned his Induſtry, what muſt the Parent feel, who meets the Child of his Love, crowned with unfading Glories, and ſees the Seeds of Virtue, which he had cultivated with tender Care ripened into full Maturity, and yielding a plentiful Harveſt of pureſt Delights! What muſt be the Tranſports of the Child, who beholds the Parent of his Nature, and his Virtues, enrobed in eternal Splendor, and riſes to meet him in

Fulneſs

Fulneſs of Joy! If the Traveller who hath long been traverſing foreign Climes, expoſed to Dangers from Seas, and Rocks, and howling Tempeſts, rejoices, on approaching his native Shore, to behold the Countenance of an approved Friend, who receives him with open Arms, and hails him welcome by a warm Embrace; What Extacy, on entering Heaven's Gates, to behold the Friends of our Boſoms haſting, on the Wings of Love, to hail us bleſſed, and uſher us into the Manſions of eternal Day! Theſe are Proſpects of pure Delight, indeed. They preſent us with a View of Happineſs which narrow Minds, partial Intereſts, and angry Paſſions baniſh from the preſent Life. They contain every Circumſtance of Delight, which is worth our Care in this World; while all it's Troubles, it's Sorrows, and it's Vanities are excluded for ever. If theſe Proſpects, then, ſhall be realized in a future World——If our departed Friends, *who ſleep in Jeſus* ſhall, not only, *be brought with him*, but reſtored to us in a State of Peace, and Love, and Joy perpetual, why ſhould we repine at their Separation from us, or *ſorrow as others who have no Hope?* If Death be the Gate to Glory, and leads thoſe whom our Hearts hold dear beyond the Reach of Infirmity, Pain, and Wretchedneſs, to Scenes of unmixed Delights, and Pleaſures without End, Friendſhip muſt rejoice, in their happy Change, with Joy unbounded. And, if Self-love foregoes a ſmall and temporary Benefit, for a greater and more durable Good, it will certainly diſpoſe us to reſign, into the Hand of God, a Friend, whoſe beſt Intentions, Narrowneſs of Underſtanding,

or

or Want of Power may render uſeleſs; and, whoſe kindeſt Affections Malice or Envy may ſet againſt us, when we know aſſuredly that a ſhort Time will reſtore him, in a State, where his Underſtanding ſhall be bright and unclouded ——Where his Friendſhip towards us will burn with a more pure and hallowed Flame than Fleſh and Blood admit of—And his Power ſhall be equal to the Generoſity of his Soul.

HOWEVER, we are not to imagine that the Influence, even, of this Hope is ſo great as totally to baniſh Sorrow from the Heart, and ſuppreſs every uneaſy Feeling to which the Death of a Friend may give Birth. Slender as the Threads are, with which "Nature hath woven "her Web of Kindneſs in the Heart of Man," even a temporary Breach is attended with Pain: Nor can the lighteſt Afflictions, of which Generoſity is the Source, be diſpelled in an Inſtant, by the ſtrongeſt Convictions of the Underſtanding, or the heavenly Voice of Religion's Self. Nor doth Underſtanding, or Religion attempt ſo much. They are juſter far to Nature's Claims, and milder to her Infirmities. They ſeek, not to deſtroy, but to regulate her Feelings, and direct them into proper Channels. Religion, even, ſanctifies the Sigh of heaven-born Pity, and Friendſhip's ſacred Tear: And Experience teaches that, while theſe are offered, as the Tribute of Humanity, and ſtrongly mark the Child of Duſt, the Soul riſes to God in Reſignation, Praiſe, and all the joyous Hopes of a bleſſed Reſurrection, and ſocial Entertainment beyond the Grave.

THE END